

jeevadhara

ETHICS, UNIFIER OF RELIGIONS

Edited by

Thomas Srampickal

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Ethics, Unifier of Religions

Edited by

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Editorial

How many conflicts and quarrels, how much bloodshed and destruction in human history were caused in the name of religion! That religion which is the symbol of the human's deepest craving for communion with the Absolute, of his persistent quest to find meaning in life and its realities and of his unabated longing for mukti, nirvana or salvation should itself become the hot-bed of enmity, confusion, pain and suffering is truly paradoxical. We give several explanations for this sad situation and often reach the conclusion that it is not due to religion as such but to the abuse and exploitation of the religious sentiment by vested interests. Or, it is not Religion but religions that cause the problem. The explanation seems to contain a good deal of truth, but it does not give us sufficient grounds for solace and comfort because it points to a wide gap between the true religious spirit and the actual practice of many adherents of institutionalized religions.

However it is heartening to see that there are people who are concerned about this painful state of affairs and sincerely ask how the "religious force" can be transformed into a means to unity and cooperation among followers of different faiths. It is here, we feel, that the role of ethical or moral dimensions of religion becomes specially significant.

Ninian Smart speaks about seven dimensions¹ of religion: experiential, narrative, ritual, doctrinal, ethical, institutional and material. All these dimensions may not be present or equally developed in all religions. The major religions of the world do exhibit these dimensions. However, each religion possesses or

1 N. Smart, *The World's Religions*, Cambridge, 1989, pp. 12-20

exhibits these dimensions in its own characteristic way. Hence they serve to distinguish and differentiate one religion from another, though sometimes we find two or more religions having the same feature in common as, for example, Judaism and Christianity believe in the same God narrated in the Old Testament. But it is in the ethical dimension that various religions more clearly manifest their consensus and unity. All religions uphold a common morality based on the *Golden Rule*. Formulated negatively, the golden rule says: Do not do to others what you would not wish others do to you. Expressed positively, it says: Do to others as you would wish them do to you. This basic ethical norm is subscribed to by the sacred books, traditions or authorities of all major religions.²

All religions propose to their adherents an ethics of brotherhood, love and tolerance. And that is what the first four articles coming from different religious persuasions or ideologies prove to us. Rev. Dr. Mervyn Carapiet, Professor of Moral Theology at Morning Star College, Calcutta, writes about Christian morality. Mr. S. N. Rao, a well known scholar of Hinduism deals with Hindu Dharma. The article by Asghar Ali Engineer, renowned Social activist and Director of the Institute of Islamic Studies, Bombay is quite thought-provoking and unveils the true Spirit of Islam. Rev. Dr. George Njarakunnel, Professor of philosophy, Pontifical Institute, Alwaye, deals with the humanistic view of morality. All of them basically converge on love and tolerance.

If the mutual respect and concern embodied in the Golden Rule and upheld by all religions is earnestly practised by all believers, religions will become instruments of peace, collaboration and unity. It was with this hope and optimism that the World Parliament of Religions held in Chicago from August 28 to September 4 this year, commemorating the centenary of the First world Parliament of Religions in 1893, spoke of a Global Ethic based on the Golden Rule.

2 N. J. Bull, *Moral judgement from childhood to adolescence*, London, 69, p. 92

Finally, the editor of this issue of *Jeevadharma* thought it opportune to present a summary of the latest encyclical of Pope John Paul II, entitled *Veritatis Splendor*. While appreciating the encyclical as a whole he has also made certain comments for further study and discussion. We hope the summary will help non-specialists towards a better understanding of the papal document.

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Thomas Srampickal

Jesus and Christian Ethics Today

Jesus' words, parables, stories, actions and reactions, nay His whole person sets the model for christian life. He was fully committed to his loving Father and His Kingdom, and shared this love with all God's children esp. the poor and the marginalized, culminating in his total self-surrender on the cross. His commitment was untainted with the legalism and formality of the Jewish rabbis and unaffected by the bureaucracy and red tapism characteristic of the present. Jesus' attitude, approach and power should challenge his followers to see, perceive and respond as he did. Rather than fixating us in religious fundamentalism and elaborate cult, the scriptures are expected to challenge the believers today to respond as creature to the problems of our times as the religious founders did in theirs.

Calcutta is the last great city to receive the Mother Ganga as she finally diffuses into small streams and rivers, like the Hooghly and the Rupnarayan, to ease herself into the Bay of Bengal and the Indian Ocean. Like the eternally flowing Ganga, pilgrims from all over India and the world flock to the imposing temple of Kali in the crowded south sector of Calcutta, joining the pellmell of the local people for a "darshan" of the benign Mother, to quaff a palmful of the true Ganga, to offer flowers, sometimes gold, in thanksgiving or propitiation, or to sacrifice a goat amidst heartfelt cries of "Kali ma ki jai". Calcutta, the most liberal city in the world, receives them all with indiscriminate hospitality, for anything is acceptable there — and nothing achieved. On a little island in the Bay of Bengal there also takes place the annual "Ganga Sagar Mela", upon which the devotees converge in lakhs. Pilgrims traverse the length and breadth of the country by road and rail for the experience of the lifegiving encounter with the Mother and a healing dip in the Sagar.

That is the large and pretentious part of the story of Calcutta. But the inconspicuous and picayune is not usually mentioned or even noticed. Some devotees who enter the teeming city are weak, ill, even dying — and anonymous. As if Calcutta did not have its bizarre share of the unknown, the suffering and the dying on its squalid street corners, the outsiders who failed to make it to the great temple complete the baleful picture of brokenness and death. Whether insiders or outsiders, the city extends to them the liberality of its streets and the honour of death without distinction. Vehicles whiz by and pedestrians hurry too hard pressed with engagements to take notice of these miserable people whom the city of the benign Mother has no way of helping. They die desolate and unknown, their corpses lie in the macabre postures in which the final pangs of agony leave them. The open tin truck of the "Hindu Satkar Samity" comes round to pick them up for their last journey to the burning ghat. If the body happened to be that of a Muslim, it is carried away by the "Anjuman Mufidul Islam's" van.

She was chaperoning the girls back to their prestigious boarding upon the hill, after the long winter vacation; but as the little train chugged up, she felt a tug in the opposite direction that left her with a sense of discomfort among the children of the affluent. That was the beginning of a story that will be told a thousand times ten thousand till the end of time: the story of how this foreign woman from Albania turned in her card and how Calcutta awoke one morning to Mother Teresa picking up the diseased and dying off the streets of Calcutta, a phenomenon hitherto unseen and unheard of. She was allowed to use the "dharmasala" meant for the pilgrims, a short distance from the great Kali temple, to house her dying, her "pilgrims of the Absolute". From then on, no one need be abandoned and dying on the streets of Calcutta, for her "missionaries of charity" are close by and can be relied on to do a quick and complete job, even the clipping of the patient's toe nails!

"We do it for Jesus", they keep saying, and, one may add, like him, too. The ethics that has the mark of the love of Jesus Christ is one of urgent, complete and whole-hearted

action. What would one do with a bunch of filthy urchins — lovable kids in their own right — who are running loose and messing up the neighbourhood? These sisters of charity beckon them with love, clean them with plenty of water and soap and fresh towels, scrub them down till their skins were shiny and ruddy with the glory of their Creator. Then they would put them into clean and well-fitting clothes, have them medically checked up and treated if anyone is unfit. After that they would educate them into an integral humanity to prepare them for life, and, whenever possible, impart to them the most precious possession they have, the Faith. It could be the beginning of another community of Faith, in which they would discover the true God as the God of the poor; for "the poor are Christ here and now, and constitute the route to a discovery of and discourse upon God"¹.

The model

An honest reading of the signs of the times will produce the inescapable perception that the task is pressing and demands thoroughness. But for a Christian, the reading must be done in the light of the scriptures. "...virtue ethicists are finding in the scriptures the narratives of a pilgrim people trying to become the people who embody virtues that speak to us today, a cross which lights our horizon enabling us to see ourselves as sinful but saved, and a promise from our loving God that we shall come to know the kingdom"². Christian ethics cannot but primarily be modelled on Jesus Christ whose life and actions are archetypal and paradigmatic for the community of his ever expanding body. In the midst of human life God reaches out to us in the person of Jesus Christ. In Jesus God gives himself fully and man gives himself to God totally. This is the supreme albeit very general norm of the moral life, flowing from the principle of Faith, where Faith is understood as the response to God's self-giving to us. Jesus' person, words and actions are our guide. He is the standard by which our purposes are judged. By recalling his words, parables, life and

1 Enrique Dussel, *Ethics and Community*, Orbis books, N. Y. 1988, p. 229.

2 James F. Keenan, S. J., "Christian Ethics: the last ten years", in *The Way*, London, July 1992, p. 221.

death, we are conformed to do what we discern about Jesus' own attitudes and bearing towards others, and his intentions which were shaped by his trust in God. His heart was set on His Father and His Kingdom. Keeping in mind that Jesus is one of us, knowing our pains and joys and revealing our deepest possibilities, we come to realise that Jesus Christ fulfils what we recognise within us as true personhood³. It was not necessary for Christ to exhaust the several potentialities of human nature, taken discreetly. This would have been impossible in one historical lifetime. For instance, he was not a great painter or a philosopher or a statesman or a great husband, though we must admit he was a teacher *par excellence*, combining in that activity a great amount of true art and poetry. But the point is that Jesus concentrated in himself all the power and energy that human nature is capable of for activating any of the avocations that a man or woman may choose, and he concentrated it to a degree that no other human could muster, a degree so high as to make it fit to be used by God. This power was the power of his *self-giving love* at the service of the Word. Thus, in preference to all other possibilities, Jesus chose the essential and the most distinctively human potentiality of all, the one that has the most radical claim on all men and women: self-surrendering love⁴.

He was led by the Spirit into the wilderness and was led by the same Spirit of love to those who were marginal to the Jewish establishment. In the process he had to confront the Pharisees, the unquestioned power of the time. "These (Pharisees) used to be the poor, but they had fashioned for themselves out of their poverty a claim on God to receive their right, and thus they had secretly become rich. With the first verse of the Sermon on the Mount, these riches are rejected. 'Blessed are the poor in spirit.' It is these alone who are open for what is now coming, what was intended and aimed at from the outset: the superiority of God's love, which lays low the boundaries."⁵ Besides scouting the claims of the Pharisees to final

3 cfr. R. M. Gula, *What are they saying about moral norms?* Paulist Press, N. Y. 1981, pp. 113-114.

4 cfr. John Macquarrie, *Three Issues in Ethics*, SCM Press, London, 1970, p. 86.

5 Hans Urs Von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord*, Vol VII, T & T Clark, Edinburgh 1989, p. 436.

authority and earning thereby their deadly hatred (Jn 12:53), Jesus stultified the attitudes, practices and structures that restricted real and potential members of the Jewish community. Those at the periphery were shot to the centre: the poor, diseased, hungry and lamenting, the possessed, the persecuted and heavily-laden, the ignorant rabble, the little ones, the lost-sheep, the foreigners and the harlots. They were objectively "no good" or were considered such. But the point is simply that Jesus turned to all people who were pushed aside: to the sick (read A. I. D. S.) who were segregated on cultic and ritual grounds, to the prostitutes and sinners who were ostracised on moral grounds, and to the tax-collectors who were excluded on religious and political grounds. Tax-collectors and prostitutes because of the misery from their ostracism readily responded to His call while others did not.⁶ Jesus did not wait for authorization or a working relationship with the top brass to commence his ministry. His mental diary was too crammed with commitments to the poor to leave any place to please the rich or for appointments with the VIPs, and his ethics brushed aside the red tape to allow him hasten to the dispossessed. The poor cannot wait, for they are "anxious for tomorrow" and "worry about what to eat and what to wear" (Mt 6:34), and, unless someone helps them immediately, "they will collapse on the way" (Mk 6:33; 8:3). "Jesus spans the Hebrew checkerboard, but his focus is primarily on these outcasts. These were the social throwaways — dumped on the human trash pile. Instead of spitting on them, as the rest of society does, Jesus touches them, loves them, and names them God's people."⁷

The Christ action is immediate and complete: it does a thorough job that is charged with urgency. Jesus had all the answers to questions off pat, and he healed the sick on the spot. He did not insist on the long drawn out programme which could take up to six weeks of purification, shaving of hairs, and surveillance. Rather, "Jesus stretched out his arm saying, 'I am willing, be cleansed.' And his skin disease was

6 cfr. David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, Orbis Books, N. Y. 1922, p. 27.

7 D. B. Krayhill, *The Upside Down Kingdom*, Scottdale 1990, p. 223.

cleansed at once" (Mt 8:3). He also healed completely. While curing the blind man, putting spittle on his eyes and laying his hand on him, he asked, "Can you see anything?" The man who was *beginning* to see, replied, "I can see people; they look like trees as they walk around!" Then he laid his hands on the man's eyes again and he saw clearly; he was cured, and he could see everything plainly and distinctly" (Mk 8:23b-25). In most of the healing narratives, there is either the inclusion of the deeper cleansing of the spirit or at least the demand of faith, viz., the conscious recognition of the divine presence and the action within. "Seeing their faith, Jesus said to the paralytic, 'My child, your sins are forgiven,'" (Mk 2:5). Like a sacrament in which the symbol indicates-effects the reality, and the reality shapes the symbol, Jesus, the primordial sacrament, elevated the inner being by a transfusion of the divine while acting through the perceptible sign of healing, a healing nonetheless real for its being symbolic. All this makes it quite clear that Christian ethical action must touch the depths of the Spirit just as much as it is expeditious in its operation.

He demanded of his disciples an immediate response and an unconditional attachment to His Person, even if, initially, they did not understand His cause, and therefore, responded not of their own volition but as answer to his command, "Follow me" (Mt 8:22). Here again we discern the typical features of Christian discipleship — unvacillating and total. Levi leaving his kiosk, stuffy with extortion (Mt 9:9), the fishermen "at once" leaving their nets (Mt 4:19-22), to be transformed in a trice into disciples and intimates of this unusual, new Rabbi who left them no choice and demanded their all. "No one who prefers father and mother to me is worthy of me. Anyone who finds his life will lose it; anyone who loses his life for my sake will find it" (Mt 10:37-39). Walking hard on the heels of this itinerant preacher-healer made considerable calls on their energy, especially when his style and teaching produced a psychic dissonance for being radical without precedent and too mysterious for their present understanding. Consider the diptych, typical of Matthew for stressing a particular teaching, presented in chapters 5:29-32 and 19:3-12 respectively. The condemnation of marriage after divorce in the latter pericope complements that of lust in the former which is without parallel in the Old

Testament; and the demand to excise an offending limb (Matthew 5:30) resonates loudly the call to make oneself a eunuch if needed, in order to qualify for membership in the Kingdom of God. Taken materially, the teaching seems to be repugnant but nonetheless quite completely moral if understood of one who, having repudiated an unfaithful spouse, cannot re-marry and should, in view of the Kingdom, choose to remain abstinent that would effectively make one like a eunuch.

This Kingdom value may have appeared a harsh demand, but it was made by Jesus in order to impeach the "hardness of heart" (Mt 19:8). In another place Jesus unmasked the callous and one-sided structure when he vindicated justice for the poor woman caught in adultery (Jn 8:7-9). If those loveless hearts could only have accepted-integrated the feminine principle, the "anima", residing within the male psyche, they would not have taken up stones, and the Judeo-Christian ethics would have got off to a splendid start!

The totally dispossessed Son

If Jesus demanded of his disciples immediate and total detachment (Mk 10:17-22; Lk 14:33), it was to draw them into the radical intentionality of his own profound self-dispossession. "No, the greatest among you must behave as if he were the youngest, the leader as if he were the one who serves!" (Lk 24:26b-27). No sooner had he said this than the Lucan tradition paints a picture of the deepening intimacy of Jesus with his disciples, which like any genuine intimacy, leads on to the encounter with the divine (vs. 39). Strangely but truly, the scene on the Mount of Olives makes a diptych with that [on the mountain of the Transfiguration by a link of shattering reality. The episode of the Transfiguration revealed the pre-existent Son in his "natural" state, the condition in which he always ought to and had a right to be, with "his face shining like the sun and his clothes dazzling white" (Mt 17:2). And yet "Jesus' transfiguration on the mountain shows clearly the structure involved here; it shows that the Son of Man's form is a function of his glorified form. The transfigured Christ is the one who reveals himself by condescending to become man. What we have here is the very glory of God on its way to the

Passion''⁸. The "kenosis" is not an opaque Christological dialectic that destroys all forms; rather, its structure is truly visible to faith, so overpowering is it for man's spirit and sentiment to realise that the most glorious aspect of God's glory is precisely this divine disposition that becomes manifested in Christ's total self-dispossession. The Servant form, therefore, is the very form of God. If reality is what nature is all about, then Jesus' nature attained reality, was "realised" when his face hit the earth at Gethsemane (Mt 26:29) and made him cry "Abba".

The agony in which Christ writhed in total aloneness was not just on account of a vague prevision of imminent torture and death but the much more radical fear that these represented blank futility, powerlessness, the death of hope. "The intricate loveliness of the flesh could no longer serve the needs of the spirit, as it had done, but it struggled desperately against the disintegration which alone could give the spirit complete freedom."⁹ The uttermost existential experience was reached, the perception of the final impotence of the creature in which the self was annihilated, giving way to the original and ultimate truth of God, the Wholly-Other. Here was the mysterious meeting point or, rather, the consummation of the Incarnation in which God had assumed the wholly-other. Christ is, precisely as man, God's total self-utterance in his self-emptying, in his kenotic plunge into history. His humanity lays bare the heart of the ultimate reality, the "Ens Realissimum". Here faith in God is absolutely pure and it is precisely here where the atheists suppose it is at an end. Here resides one of the deep meanings of the Nicene "homousios": "I and the Father are one; the Father is in me and I am in the Father" (Jn 14:17). No term more exhaustive of the idea of "homousios" could have been provided than that of Jesus' "Abba, Father". Here was the OM of Jesus, the uttermost reality of his own life where lay the deepest source of his person and authority; a testimony of the kind of communion he had with

8 Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord*, Vol I, T & T Clark, Edinburgh 1988, p. 671.

9 Rosemary Haughton, *On Trying to be Human*, Sheed & Ward, London 1966, p. 150.

God, the sense of unique sonship of which he was conscious. Jesus Christ, the resumé of all creation, died in God, and never was God closer to his creation in a relationship of father and child as on that day when this same Jesus was godforsaken.¹⁰ "Here is where, without condescension, God crossed over to the level of the utterly poor and derelict."¹¹ "That Jesus went through a powerful testing of his faith and obedience before his death is firmly rooted in the tradition."¹² Commenting on Luke's portrayal of the Gethsemane experience, the author just quoted continues, "It would be a complete and insensitive misreading to think that Luke has 'diminished the humanity' of Jesus by this portrayal, or engaged in a sort of docetism. Indeed, he portrays Jesus as engaged in the most fundamental sort of struggle for the human will. Like Jacob wrestling all night with the angel (Gen 32:24-32), Jesus 'enters the struggle' against the power of darkness, and in his prayer, accepts his destiny."¹³

Having assumed human nature, the Son of God would prove himself loyal to man to the last consequences, redolent of Yahweh's "I am who am" identity as the steadfastly loyal one. It is in this total descent and availability as head and fellow member of humanity that men find Christ the most effective saviour. "For our sake He made the sinless one a victim for sin, so that in him we might become the uprightness of God" (2 Cor 5:21). Here was the "non-being" of sin, personalised by the Gospel's "publicans and harlots", who were not even capable of doing "right", as most people understood it. And in this moral wilderness they found Jesus, who had entered it deliberately, whereas they had been thrown there by circumstances.¹⁴ How true this is of today, an era devastated by cruelty and ethnic dismemberment, when the children have to flee their homes clutching the infirm hands of the elderly as they limp away from their ancestral dwellings, sensing in their utter despair that they will never return in their lifetime, the grave now their sole estate. It was so with Jesus also. The

10 cfr. Mervyn Carapiet, *Tension Anthropology of Vatican II*, Rome 1978, pp. 176-177.

11 Hans Urs Von Balthasar, op. cit. Vol VII, p. 441.

12 L. T. Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, Sacra Pagina, Collegville 1991, p. 354.

13 ibid. p. 355.

14 cfr. Rosemary Haughton, op. cit. p. 147.

temporary mastery of death over him was permitted that he might enter the territory of the enemy and vanquish him the more securely from within. His death was no façade but quite real and was the obverse of the genuine new life that issued from it. "He descended into hell" is a faith phrase about the thoroughness of his death, reflecting the thoroughness of his love and consequently the thoroughness of its radical efficacy. We understand better, one of John's best loved lines, charged with tense anticipation: "Jesus, knowing that his hour had come to pass from this world to the Father, having loved those who were his in the world, loved them to the end" (13:1). Descending into the essential womb of the universe, Jesus began his operation of reconciliation from the roots, reducing to powerlessness, in the process, the principalities that had had their status in the innermost and essential structure of the cosmos. If his descent into *hades* was a prolongation of the leap he made in his Incarnation, his death established a new pancosmic dominion embracing all dimensions of created existence. Jesus Christ is now the innermost centre of the "fieri" of history and creative evolution, and can be encountered without intermediary in any part of the universe, for the whole universe is the "milieu divine". At the very heart of the dynamic of creation and human history there is the Lord. The moral theology that we construct is not satisfied merely to observe the process but rather to witness to it, indeed, become part of it. Christian ethics becomes by human intent an operative of human history in which the divine and the human have a purchase on each other.

Solidarity in moral struggle

"Basically there is only one Christian and he died on the cross." This statement may have been Nietzsche's¹⁵ jibe at Christianity as a nihilist outcrop of Judaism, but it may quite aptly sum up man's solidarity with Christ who had already introduced him to the drama of option between self and God. "Within Christianity it (Christian ethics) becomes a question about Christology, for in Christianity Jesus Christ is believed to have experienced what it is to be related to God and what it is to be human in the fullest and deepest way. In Jesus Christ God is fully revealed and present, as is humanity's

15 Werk VII, 26.

humanness. The Constitution 'Gaudium et Spes' underlines that aspect constantly and pressingly, presenting Jesus Christ as the 'new man' and the true answer to the mystery of human destiny."¹⁶ Jesus was a man who tested life and was tested by it, searching out life's meaning by listening carefully to what makes life valuable, and he lived and died trusting that life and death were not bad jokes. So also, our discipleship is not without moral problems. Yet, the value of discipleship is that it inspires a vision and provides a context for moral analysis and choice. Imitating Christ is not a piece of mimicry but a challenge to live our human adventure as authentically as he did, even though we are wounded by sin and our capacity for commitment is limited thereby. We can agree with Dietrich Bonhoeffer when he says, "The truly concrete situation is not some historical happening, but the sinner standing before God, and the answer to that situation is the crucified and the risen Lord."¹⁷ The perennial exercise of Christian ethical judgement visualises man standing always in the shadow of the Last Judgement, but in a tension of uncertainty as to what is certainly good. "Through conscience we know that we are subjected to transcendent demands and (since we are forced to reflect on our actions) that we have been transposed into the field of tension between guilt and innocence."¹⁸ Or, as Vatican II says, "Man, therefore, is divided in himself. As a result, the whole life of man, both individual and social, shows itself to be a struggle, and a dramatic one, between good and evil, between light and darkness."¹⁹

In an epoch that extols the achievements of man — something that the Vatican Council also heartily hails — and that is absorbed with the consumeristic concerns of the self, the Christ event shows that human realisation is attained by an inescapable and total surrender to the totally Other. Man's very being consists in being taken over. This occurs when he truly loves and gives himself to the other; assumed, though not absorbed, into the life of the other. Man, as individual and species, comes

16 Lucien Richard, *Is there a Christian Ethics?* Paulist Press, 1988, p. 98.

17 *No Rusty Swords*, Fontana 1974, p. 16.

18 Ernst Kaseman, *Perspectives on Paul*, SCM 1971, p. 17.

19 G S 13.

into his own by continuous self-questioning, the reassessment of standpoints and reshaping of horizons, by endless self-giving and self-abandonment. Always the unsettled animal, the unlimited reference to the limitless, man will finally arrive when he is assumed by God as his own reality, a goal towards which he was already and always in tension by virtue of what he is. Jesus Christ's conflictual exodus from Galilee to Jerusalem is the archetypal resumé of man's struggle for liberation and salvation. The path that he has traced before us must be trod over again by every man. The verses of Psalm 114 ring out as a true recapitulation of every man's exodus from alienation to freedom: "When Israel came forth from Egypt, the house of Jacob from a people of alien tongue." Thus man is launched with Christ, who was baptised into alienated humanity, into the mission of salvation; and man's history has been marked by his struggle against the powers of destruction. "The whole of man's history has been the story of our combat with the power of evil, stretching, so Our Lord tells us (Mt 24:13; 13:24-30 and 36-43), from the very dawn of history until the last day."²⁰ With all its optimism, the Vatican Council was yet too sanguine to allow itself to be lulled into a self-deluding stupor about the existence of evil.

Universal moral discourse

Unless one is unreasonably fundamentalist, one does not expect from the scriptures accurate and exact answers to the contemporary issues encountered in individual situations, even though such problems are not necessarily unique. For instance, apart from its affirmation of life and bodily integrity, the ministry of Jesus and that of the primitive community is not indicative of solutions to today's difficulties of birth regulation and population control, ecological imbalance, and a plethora of questions thrown up by micro-biology, akin to the runaway cells of a galloping cancer. Barring acute fundamentalists, no one would expect from the New Testament direct unravellings of such knotty fixes. Jesus was sent to the house of Israel, but his including all people in his action (cfr. Jn 11:52; 12:32) convinced the first community about addressing the message to the whole world as it was then known (cfr. Rom 5:12-21; 11:32; Phil 2:11; 1 Cor

10:33). They did a splendid job of work. The scriptures still quite validly present the leitmotiv and paradigm for future generations if for nothing else at least for doing the truth in love. But "while they have much to teach us today, they were not written in response to the specific problems which beset us here and now. Rather than fixating us in the past, the scriptures (Bible and Koran) challenge believers today to respond in as creative a way to the problems of our times as Jesus and Mohammed did in theirs. The cults, on the other hand, often encourage their members to withdraw from the real world with its pain and insecurity and to live completely within the walls of the cult's ideology and culture."²¹

Just as the life and teaching of Jesus Christ are archetypal and paradigmatic for the life and actions of his future disciples, so by analogy, the Church's moral teaching is not meant to replace the personal conscience decisions on the casuistic plane. The question of what is morally right in situations requires, as confessed by "Gaudium et Spes" and "Apostolicam Actuositatem", a high degree of specialised knowledge which no amount of exegesis can derive from revelation. In fact, "as such, fundamentals and norms—however we may distinguish them—are equally accessible to human knowledge ('in the conscience') and are so in the same way: norms are not simply deductions from fundamentals."²² Thus the Church's possession of moral knowledge must also take into consideration that it has been found, extra-ecclesially, by human knowledge, often helped along by disparate faith persuasions. It would seem, therefore, that, taking part in the moral discourse that enhances the collective wisdom of humanity in every epoch, the magisterium of the Church functions as a kind of exemplary pedagogy for moral discernment without discrediting personal reflection and lay competence. Since lay people contribute to the constitutive definition of the Church, and since the diversification of expertise is explicitly acknowledged by Vatican II, the magisterium should also include their insights born of the marriage of experience

21 Sean McDonagh, *To Care for the Earth*, Geoffrey Chapman, London 1990, p. 200.

22 Josef Fuchs, S. J., "A Harmonisation of the Conciliar Statements on Christian Moral Theology", in *Vatican II, Assessments and Perspectives, Twenty-five years after*, ed. Rene Latourelle, N. Y. 1989, p. 496.

and critique. In the true sense this is ecclesial praxis which is presumably healthy and capable of integrating the phenomenon of dissent. The quality of magisterial suppleness will forestall a one-sided dishing out of ploddingly heavy-footed moral agenda which would otherwise result in the pedagogy of alienation. "The invalidation of dissent discredits personal reflection and freezes the church's process within the last available official formulation. There is simplicity and security in this — but also the stillness of the musoleum."²³ Like an understanding teacher, the magisterium will have the exhilarating experience of seeing its faithful people's eyes being opened to dimensions of reality hitherto hidden. "In practical moral matters, the very last thing one arrives at is a moral norm. A moral norm is a generalisation about the significance of our actions. It is a conclusion from understanding that significance. When it is at the front as the dominant preoccupation, it hinders teaching and learning by bypassing the struggles that lead to understanding. We call this moralism."²⁴

The swathe of freedom

In his latest book, *Integral Spirituality*²⁵, Donal Dorr suggests that the wide swathe of Christian spirituality includes the interpersonal and political components, apart from the taken-for-granted vertical or the personal. A contemplation of Jesus reveals that, his personal interface with his Father aside, Jesus kept developing a challenging, albeit intimate, interaction with his disciples, even to the washing of their feet. But as if to make sure that his incipient circle did not close in, cultwise, on itself, Jesus was open to and confrontal with the religious and political representatives of the powers that were there. These open confrontations with the Temple authorities, Pilate and Herod (against whom his silence was a powerful weapon) were expressions of his supreme moral freedom. The subject matter of moral theology is, in fact, human freedom: that precious gift that should be maintained untarnished by compromises with the powers — of the political authorities, of the Church, of the state, and of the market forces. Authentic freedom is not measured

23 Richard McCormick, S. J. *The Critical Calling*, Georgetown University Press, 1989, p. 125.

24 *ibid.*

25 Gill and Macmillian, Dublin 1990.

by pragmatic calculus but by our strength for empowering the weak and setting people free by the power of truth. "The truth will set you free" is Jesus' terse token of "satyagraha", which relentlessly seeks to do the truth in love. But since the highest truth is God, the "ens realissimum" and principle of all reality, our freedom is nourished in our dialogue with God, as it was in the case of Jesus, not for the purpose of breaking the law and subverting the powers but to reveal their significance in terms of pure truth that we all seek individually and in sincere dialogue with others. "The Liberator frees us, and when we become free we are freed from the power. Being freed we enter into dialogue with God again. God is again the living God for us, for we are alive again, i.e., free, in Christ and through Christ. The word can again become for us the word of God, and our own word takes on a new seriousness where our freedom for God makes it into prayer, which is the source of every authentic human word."²⁶ No power or law is valid unless it is validated by the law of liberty. No man or institution has more power over us than our authentic freedom will allow. "I came into the world for this, to bear witness to the truth... You would have no power over me at all if it had not been given you from above" (Jn 18:37b; 19:11a). "The Lord himself bears witness to this. The Liberator promises that man will be set free from the law of murder, theft, and adultery (that it is possible for him not to kill anymore etc.). It goes much further. He is not just enabled to make a choice. The promise of God is that he will in effect become this free man."²⁷

Throughout his ministry, Jesus was calling on his hearers and interlocutors to confront that precious endowment called freedom and to make a definitive choice in a given situation. Whether it was for the intimacy of discipleship, acceptance of him as Bread of life, the indissolubility of marriage, the worship in Spirit and in truth, the rendering unto Caesar, the use of power; his summons was to a progressive transcendence in terms of the developmental purpose of the original "image and likeness of God" motif of gift and task. In simple terms, it was to ask all men and women to make use of the faculty of

26 Jacques Ellul, *The Ethics of Freedom*, Grand Rapids, 1976, p. 149.

27 *ibid.* p. 149.

freedom in order to attach themselves to something higher than themselves: the Kingdom and its values in which all are called to share. God, the supremely moral person, affirming Himself as totally true and good, and revealing His being as love, is greater than the human heart (cfr. 1 Jn 4:16b; 3:20). This spiritual endowment, which is at the root of our human tasks, has been vindicated by freedom incarnate, Jesus Christ, who empowers the human by his truth and love. Ascending into the freedom of God through the Incarnate Word, a man is able to participate in God's liberative works. By the transfusion of the divine that happened at the Incarnation, God is personally present in the human existential in such a way that no human condition is outside the charismatic movement of the Incarnation. "The Incarnate Word is Lord of all, not just of the Church. There are not two worlds, one sacred and the other secular. There are differing ways of understanding [the one world and a choice has to be made about what the right way is, the way that corresponds to reality beyond all the show which the ruler of this world can put on. It is not a question of the Church versus the secular world. The boundary between the two realms runs through each of us."²⁸ That is why it should be the rule and not the exception to have saintly wives and husbands, teachers and students, saintly statesmen and politicians, businessmen and industrialists, workers and soldiers.

Justice and Spirituality

The beautiful but obsolescent Christian spirituality that usually consisted of a one to one relationship with God, in Christ, and spread its fragrance by works of charity to others, has now expanded to embrace every condition of human life. Somewhat akin to the definition of health, which began with the petty and individualistic "mens sana in corpore sana", but has expanded under the influence of moral cosmology to assume the character of freedom that can marshall the human, medical and environmental resources for the fulfilment of one's total vocation, so in this era, no spirituality — or "life in the Spirit" — is worth its mettle unless imbibed with the ethic of liberating the world's oppressed and of bequeathing a wholesome earth

28 Leslie Newbigin, *Truth to Tell: The Gospel as Public Truth*, WCC Pub., Geneva, 1991, p. 49,

to future generations. It is spirituality's concern, for instance, that Third World governments are forced by the international monetary authorities to cut food subsidies to the poor and their health and education budgets. "Interest and capital payments transfer more than £400 million *every day* from the poor to the rich — as much as the Third World spends on health and education combined and considerably more than the First World sends in aid. That is why the bankers are happy. They are quietly continuing to make money on Third World debt... 15% of Lloyds' profits and a staggering 95% of Midland profits were from repayments of Third World debt."²⁹ It is also well known that this economic disablement is directly linked to modern man's depredations of planet Earth, a knowledge that is acute as it is well nigh despairing, unless something quick and thorough is undertaken to reverse the deadly trend.

The "power plasticity model", for instance, whereby human, animal and material creation is considered as alien, possessing no inherent value, and therefore malleable in the hands of the power echelons (scientists and captains of industry), must give way to the "sacral-symbiotic model", according to which the world is seen as God's creation, whose internal laws must be heeded and accepted in the common endeavour for balanced development in a context of cosmotheandric proportions. Salvation and eternity are now, in which God's moral will is not merely identified with his physically creative will; if that were so, there could be no symbiotic intervention in the natural dynamism of biological creation. But if God is also the *enabler* of our possibilities, as suggested by Thomas Aquinas in his *Summa Theologica* I-II, q. 91, a. 2, the perspective becomes more understandable in terms of co-creatorship and of commitment to a developing universe. This mental-emotional posture makes feasible an ultimate trust in reality but not without the cost of an ultimate accountability. The fluid and plastic world that man is committed to fashion includes human nature itself. Thus our attitude towards the world is one of paradoxical tension, combining both appreciation and manipulation, the quest for knowledge and humble submission before an intangible mystery.

29 Paul Vallely, "Forgive us our debts", in *The Tablet*, London, 17 August 1993, p. 998.

The deliberative franchise is wielded by the people closest to the ground, for they hold the key to the unlocking and channelling of the power under their feet. Here is primordial respect and it is continuous with the ongoing event of the Incarnation: "and all flesh will see the salvation of our God" (Lk 3:6). All the inner workings of the power decisions of the nation must be made plain to the people who elected their representatives and whose lives are affected thereby. We cannot emphasise enough that no result, wrong or right, of a scientific experiment is entirely scientific. So also no social project is the sole preserve of the sociologists any more than a political decision the perquisite of politicians. There must, therefore, be an authority wider than that of closed groups, however competent the latter may be, to influence the making and help balance the values of power decisions; and that too openly and publicly. "To put it crudely, good structures influence bad people to do right things, bad structures make it harder or even on occasions impossible, for good people to avoid doing 'wrong things. The gospel of the kingdom of God, rooted in the witness of the synoptic gospels to the ministry of Jesus, embodies an eschatological dissatisfaction with things as they are which prompts the urge to improve them."³⁰ The matter touches too closely a nerve of humanity to be the preserve of only one sector of people. In such a matter, secrecy is suspect, which is why the media have a prophetic role to play.

Conclusion

No treatise of moral theology is complete unless it substantially addresses the political, social, economic and ecological obligations of Christ's faithful. In other words, our lives are enmeshed interactively with the interdependent strands of politics, economics, genetics and ecology, and Christ is enmeshed with us in them. Books on ethics bristle with the demands for a new world order in which the prescriptions of option for the poor and liberation of the oppressed/oppressor are standard. The signals are urgent and our time to act is now. "I have come to bring fire to the earth, and how I wish it were blazing already! There is a baptism I must still receive, and what constraint I

30 Ronald H. Preston, *The Future of Christian Ethics*, SCM 1987, p. 172.

am under until it is completed!" (Lk 12:50). Again, there is the tension born of urgency and thoroughness. "The mysteries of Christ are our mysteries", wrote Abbot Marmion as the caption of the first chapter of his elevating classic, *Christ in his mysteries*.³¹ Whatever befell Christ must happen to us, because "no servant is greater than his master" (Jn 13:16; 15:20); and it is "in reality, only in the mystery of the Word made flesh that the mystery of man truly becomes clear."³²

Let me conclude, recollecting a train journey years later, with a few sisters of Charity. The Mother was not with them. The writer was returning from the ordination of one of his students. They asked him, "Father, what do you teach?" On his replying, "Moral Theology" they almost froze, and one of them said, "We call various priests to give us courses and talks but not a professor of moral theology, since these modern professors make excuses for sins, especially of sexuality." The writer of this paper replied, "My dear Sister, moral theology is not about concessions to sexuality, but it is about how to love God and serve the neighbour in the various situations that crop up in life. Like you, Sister, we also do it for Jesus; and, we hope, like him — swift and thorough."

31 Sands and Co., London, 1919.

32 G S 22.

Mervyn Carapiet

A Human-oriented Value System

The modern man is preoccupied with production and consumption. And the society has become mechanized. Man's own creations - machines, computers, scientific theories - control him today. He has lost his capacity to feel; he is lonely and alienated. Only love and reason can save him. He should learn to use things and love persons; not the other way round. This is basically "humanism". Through its concern for the true well-being of the human and promotion of love and care, humanism can, to a great extent, be a remedy for the ailments of today's society.

One of the striking phenomena of our century is the increased awareness of the need for genuine humanism. Humanism has always emerged as a reaction to threats to humankind. The revival of humanism today is a protest against the alienation of the human, his loss of self and his transformation into a thing in the contemporary consumption-oriented technological society. This reaction is felt in all camps irrespective of ideological differences. Today everybody wants to be a humanist. Humanism in general is that philosophy of life which recognizes the dignity and value of the human and believes in his/her potential to realize and perfect himself. Jack Maritain defines humanism as "that ideology which tends to render man more human and to make his original greatness manifest by causing him to participate in all that can enrich him in nature and history".¹

The human and the machine

Erich Fromm in his *Revolution of Hope towards a Humanized Technology*, gives a brilliant analysis of the modern²

1 Jack Maritain, *True Humanism*, London: Geoffrey Bless, (1938) P. XII.

2 Erich Fromm, *Revolution of Hope towards a Humanized Technology*, (Newyork : Bentham Book, 1971)

technological society. He warns that we are facing a new specter: a completely mechanized society, devoted to maximal material output and consumption, directed by computers. In this process, the human himself is transformed into a part of the machine, well-fed, and entertained, yet passive, unalive, with little feeling. He has lost control over his own system. He has become simply the executor of the decisions of the computers. He does not do anything except to produce and consume. The slogan is "to produce more to consume more". How did this situation arise? In the one-sided emphasis, answers Fromm, on technique and material consumption, the human lost control of and touch with himself, his life. Having lost religious faith and humanistic values bound up with it, he concentrated on technical and material values and lost capacity for deep emotional experiences. As a cog in the machine he becomes a thing and ceases to be human. The machine he built has become so powerful that it develops its own programme, which now determines the human's thinking. He spends time doing things in which he is not interested, with people in whom he has no interest. He has lost even his privacy. Privacy is necessary for the human to collect himself and free himself from the noisy surroundings.

Basic principles of technology

Erich Fromm gives two basic principles of technology: First, "something ought to be done because it is technologically possible". For example, if it is possible to build nuclear weapons, they must be built even if there is the danger of total destruction. This principle negates all values of humanism. Humanism holds that something should be done because it is good, true or beautiful, or it is needed for the human. With this principle other values are dethroned. Technological progress becomes the foundation of ethics.

Second, "maximal efficiency and output". The requirement of the maximal efficiency leads to the requirement of minimal individuality. Individuals are cut into quantifiable units whose identity is expressed on punched cards. Individual finds his identity in corporation than in himself. Fromm deplores that the vast majority of our fellow humans are not even aware of the seriousness

of the situation. We continue to profess individualism, freedom, and faith in God, but our professions are wearing thin.³

Existential experience of the contemporary human

The existential experience of humans of today is well expressed by Bertrand Russel in his metaphor. "Mankind is in the position of a man climbing a difficult and dangerous precipice, at the summit of which there is a plateau of delicious mountain meadows. With every step that he climbs, his fall, if he does fall, becomes more terrible; with every step his weariness increases and the ascent grows more difficult. At least there is only one more step to be taken, but the climber does not know this, because he cannot see beyond the jutting rocks at his head. His exhaustion is so complete that he wants nothing but rest. If he lets go, he will find rest in death. Hope calls: "One more step, perhaps it will be the last effort needed". Irony retorts: "Silly fellow, haven't you been listening to hope all this time, and see where it had landed you". Optimism says: "while there is life there is hope". Pessimism growls: "while there is life there is pain". Does the exhausted climber make one more effort, or does he let himself sink into the abyss? In a few years those of us who are still alive will know the answer."⁴

Hoping that science and technology would provide a paradise of happiness, the human has left behind his faith in God and enduring values. His dream did not materialize. He is now in a very helpless situation like the one in the metaphor of Russel. He has become a problem to himself. He is asking, after all, is it worthwhile to live. The mortal sickness affecting him today is not poverty or any deadly disease, but his indifference to life. He has lost all love for life.

Traits of the contemporary human

1. Hollowness

It would be no exaggeration to say that the chief problem of the modern human is emptiness. It means not only that many people do not know what they want; they often do not have any clear idea of what they want. Thus they feel swayed this

3 Ibidem, pp. 33ff.

4 *Impact of Science on Society*, (London: Unwin, 1976) pp. 105-6.

way or that with painful feelings of powerlessness. Many people may identify their experiences with what T. S. Eliot said:

"We are hollow men
we are stuffed men
Leaning together
Headpiece filled with straw, Alas.
Shape without form, shade without colour,
paralyzed force, gesture without motion."⁵

Emptiness has for many now changed to a state of futility and despair. One cannot live for long in a condition of hollowness. If he is not growing toward something, he does not merely stagnate, the pent up potentialities turn to morbidity and despair and eventually into destructive activities.

Emptiness will lead naturally to loss of self or identity. He may not be feeling himself master of his own decisions. He becomes, as Rollo May puts it, just a collection of mirrors reflecting the hopes and expectations of others about him. Having lost his identity, he becomes just one among the crowd. He is ready to give up his freedom and individuality for the false security offered by the crowd. Passivity and compromise are his character traits.

2. Loss of interpersonal relationship

Ours is a consumer culture. The slogan is "the more the better". The norm to judge an individual is his ability to produce. He is reduced to the level of a mere producing machine. We have become things and our fellowmen too. Here not the individual but the institution reigns supreme. Individuals are like commodities placed in the market as one against the other. The greatest concern of everybody is how to be salable at a greater price. In this context healthy interpersonal relationship is impossible. Each one becomes an island surrounded by a sea of selfish interests. Sartre said: "what is hell, that is the other". Hobbes said: "man to man is wolf". He is lonely, isolated and anxious.

What should be done

We cannot let this situation continue. There are three possibilities. First, to continue in the direction we have taken.

5 T. S. Eliot, "Hollow Men", Collected Works, (N. Y. Harcourt, 1934) p. 101.

But this will lead humans to total destruction. Second, to attempt to change the present set up by violent revolution. This would lead us to totalitarian systems.

Third, to humanize the system in such a way that it would serve the purpose of the growth and well-being of humans, by changes gradually brought as a result of the demands of a large segment of the population motivated by reason, realism and love for life. But this would mean a radical change in our social structure, in our methods of planning and management, in our overall goals, in the priorities of production. Erich Fromm says that there is increasing demand for such humanization, not only among the so called hippies and radical students, but also among those who have not forgotten the humanist tradition, whose conscience and concern are not dead and who have become more and more aware that their way of life is conducive to painful boredom.⁶

'System Man'

The first thing we have to do as regards humanizing our society is to introduce the "System Man" into our socio-economic order having human well-being as the overriding goal. Fromm says that through reason and passionate love for life and not through irrationality and hate, we can find alternatives to dehumanization. Our planning must be humanistically oriented. Machines and computers should become a functional part in a life-oriented social system, not a cancer which begins to play havoc and eventually kill the system. Human unfolding, not the individual industrial progress, must become the supreme principle of the social organization.

The Human-oriented value system

All the humanists recommend strongly psychospiritual renewal for humanizing our society. Material needs guarantee only human's physical survival. But beyond that they have got certain transurvival needs, such as love, tenderness, reason, sorrow etc. Mental health and sanity of humans depend to a great extent on the measure of satisfaction they get for these needs.

⁶ Erich Fromm, *Op. cit.*, pp. 99-100.

But the humanists are against authoritarian or absolute ethics. Absolute ethics holds that ethical norms are unquestionably and eternally true and do not require any revision. Absolute ethics is based on the theistic premise of the existence of God. God is the norm of morality. Humanists are also against the ethical relativism which proposes that value judgement and ethical norms are exclusively matters of taste and arbitrary preferences and that no objectively valid ethical norms can be had in this realm.

The type of value system the humanists recommend is human-oriented. Modern human feels uneasy and more and more bewildered. Although he works and strives, he always feels a sense of futility. While creating new and better means for mastering nature, he has become enmeshed in a network of those means and has lost the vision of the end which alone gives significance—the human himself. With all his knowledge about matter, he is ignorant of the most fundamental question of human existence: what he is, how he ought to live, and how the energies within himself could be used productively. He feels powerless and insignificant. He is no longer the subject of his own decisions. He feels alienated from himself and others. So he is basically lonely. We have become things; and our fellow-humans too. We despise others and ourselves for our impotence.

Coming to the norms of a humanistic ethics, humanists say that the source of all ethical conduct is to be found in the human natural self. Not self-renunciation nor selfishness, but love for self, not negation of the individual but the affirmation of his truly human self, are the supreme values of the humanistic ethics. If he is to have confidence in values, he must know himself and the capacity of his nature for goodness and productiveness. The aim of his life is to be himself; the condition to realize it, is to be for himself. Everything that fosters his growth is good; everything that prevents his growth is evil. Virtue is self-realization. Vice is self-mutilation. Sin is committed not against God but against the human. Religion is the revelation of the human and not of God. He is his own transcendence. Religious experience is the feeling of oneness with humanity. God is his realized self.

Love

Love has a very important role to play to redeem our sick society. No one is an island. The human is relational. He is dependent on others even for his physical existence. Psychologically speaking, his very existence as a human person is largely dependent on his interpersonal relationship, friendship and love. He needs others for his growth and perfection. Fraternity and sociability are the constituent elements of human person. There is a deep craving in him to love and to be loved. Love for oneself and love for others are not mutually exclusive but they are conjunctive. The love for one's self is inseparably connected with that for any other self. Genuine love is an expression of productiveness and implies care, respect, responsibility and knowledge towards others. Genuine love should not be confused with selfishness or self-interest.

Genuine love is the union between the two under the condition of retaining one's own individuality and that of the other. The dynamic quality of love lies in the very polarity: it leads to oneness and yet the individuality is not eliminated. Love is the active power in the human; a power which breaks through the walls which separate him from his fellowmen, which unites him with others; love makes him overcome the sense of isolation and separateness, yet it permits him to be himself, to retain his integrity.⁷ John Powell says that human life has its laws, one of which is: we must use things and love people. The person, whose whole life lived on the subject-object level, finds that he loves things and uses people. It is the death warrant for happiness and human fulfilment.⁸ The journey to love is the journey to the fulness of life, for it is only in the experience of love that a human being can know himself, can love what he is, and become what he potentially is. Only in love can one find cause for perennial celebration. Erich Fromm says that love is the only sane and satisfactory answer to the problems of human existence.⁹ Love alone opens our eyes fully to everything that is beautiful and terrible in

7 Erich Fromm, *Art of Loving*,³(London: Unwin Books, 1971) p. 21.

8 John Powell, *Why I am afraid to tell you who I am* (U. S. A: Argus, 1967) p. 49.

9 cfr., Erich Fromm, *Art of Loving*, Op. cit. p. 1.

human condition. Viktor Frankl says that the salvation of the human is in and through love.¹⁰

Fromm says that love is an art which needs to be learned and practised. We need real effort to attain it. Love is not a sentiment which can easily be indulged in and by any one, regardless of what maturity one has reached. Fromm is of opinion that all human attempts for love are bound to fail, unless one tries most actively to develop one's total personality, so as to achieve a productive orientation. He is a perfect person in the measure he opens in love to other persons. He is intended for community with other persons.¹¹

Secular humanism is no integral humanism

We have been exposing mostly the value system proposed by secular humanists like Erich Fromm. While acknowledging all the positive aspects of secular humanism, we strongly hold that it does not represent total or integral humanism. The slogan of secular humanism is: "man is the measure of all things". No God either in the theological or philosophical garments can save or condemn him. It is up to him to take up on to himself his and the humanity's destiny and fashion it according to his plan. All forms of the supernatural are myth. This world is a human world and humans are secular beings. The only home for them is this mundane world. It is futile to look for an extra-mundane world or supernatural solace.

A humanism based on such knowledge alone, be it of philosophy, fine arts, or of natural knowledge and science, cannot be true humanism, for it addresses itself to a partial dimension of the human. It shuts out his spiritual dimension. It tries to reform him from without leaving him inwardly hollow. It is not sufficiently sensitive either to the range and depth of the human spirit or the limitations of our situation and knowledge. When one forsakes the spirit, one loses all else in its wake. One no longer deserves the name, for a truly human life always implies the primacy of spirit over matter. When the values of the spirit are menaced, the whole human personality is endangered,

10 Cfr., Viktor Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*, p. 59

11 Erich Fromm, *Art of Loving*, p. 9ff.

for human desires, machines, and the world turn against him with a vengeance, determined to crush him beneath their accumulated weight. So the gigantic task before us is to undo or rather re-do what has been done.¹²

Albert Dondeyne says that it is equally true, considering the need for the Absolute that dwells in the human heart, humanism without God can lead to absolutization of what are only relative values, such as political power, money, racial purity, or sexuality¹³. History shows that this danger is not an illusion. This gap in the secular humanism can be filled only by a humanism that transcends purely secular forms of humanism and acknowledges the necessity and existence of a Transcendent Being whom we call God, and the limitations of the human situation and human knowledge.

Jack Maritain says that it is not by disputing the terrain with divine causality that one should affirm his liberty. But it is by recognizing that, in the whole measure, created causality and liberty are from the divine. We have to admit, says Maritain, that the created liberty is invaded, traversed, imbued even to its slightest actualization by creative causality.¹⁴

Christian humanism represents such a Transcendent Being. Alexander Ganozy puts the identity of Christian humanism in the human's special relationship to God in Christ. The God who revealed himself in Christ is over and against the human, near yet far, immanent yet infinite.¹⁵ This openness to God does not in any way hinder the fulness of humanism. Paul Tillich has said that God is the Ground of our being, Being itself. A God so understood cannot become a competitor of the human. Pope Paul VI writes in *Populorum Progressio*: "There is no doubt that man can organize the world without God, but in the final analysis he can only organize it against man. Exclusive humanism is an inhuman humanism".¹⁶

12 cfr., Michel Quoist, *The Christian Response* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1961) p. VIII.

13 Albert Dondeyne, "Modern Humanism & Christian Faith" *A Catholic Humanist Dialogue* (London: Pemberton Books, 1972) p. 15.

14 Cfr., Jack Maritain, op. cit. p. 68.

15 Alexander Ganozy, "New Tasks in Christian Anthropology", *Concilium*, Vol. VI, no. 9. June, 1973.

16 Pope Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio*, Para. 2.

For Christian humanism or any theistic humanism faith in God and concern for the human invoke each other; they are complementary, rather than being mutually opposed. Asserting that christian humanism is a true humanism, Second Vatican Council says that we are witnessing the birth of a new humanism, one in which the human is defined first of all by his responsibility towards his brothers and history.¹⁷ Humanism is an integral part of the Christian concept of God. Fr. Gomez Caffarena writes that "among many types of humanism that I have met in human history, I have found that of Jesus of Nazareth particularly attractive, although remote in time and open to completion by many more recent cultural elements. It is a humanism of universal, unselfish, brotherly love. For Jesus it was essentially linked with the acknowledgment of God as a mysterious common 'Father'. Here lies, I must say, the deepest root of my belief in God". Caffarena goes on to say that by the symbol 'Father' Jesus referred to an ultimate Ground of all being, whose most appropriate name would be, as St. John understood it, 'Love'. The logic of John's theology is surprisingly humanistic: If God so loves us, we ought to love each other... Nobody has seen God. If we love each other, God dwells in us, and his love comes through us to perfection¹⁸.

Conclusion

It is our firm conviction that Christian and secular humanism can enrich each other and complement each other. If they join together, they can contribute so much to building a just and more human world. It is high time that we realized that none of us can afford the luxury of isolation and all humans of good will must come together and try to solve the awesome problems facing humankind. Therefore, what we have in common is more than what divides us. Abbe Piere says: What matters is not the difference between believers and unbelievers, but between those who care and those who do not care for the human.

G. Njarakunnel

¹⁷ Vati. IInd. *Gaudium et Spes*, Para. 55.

¹⁸ Fr. Gomez Caffarena, "Commentary", pp. 62-3. in *A Catholic Humanist Dialogue*.

Hindu Dharma

Dharma, a complex term, can mean virtue, indebtedness, righteousness etc. The aim of 'Dharma' is the good of all. The idea of morality becomes very significant in the Indian view of life on account of the belief in Karma, according to which every consciously done act will have its recompense for the agent. Belief in Karma does not mean surrendering to one's fate, but self-determination of destiny through deeds done in previous lives. The Karma doctrine therefore prompts people to lead a truly moral life. Self-denial is understood as the very basis of morality. Manu, for example, mentions ten general duties, i.e., meant for all: contentment, forbearance, gentleness, respect for other's property, cleanliness, self-control, knowledge, wisdom, veracity and patience. These are meant for the good of both, the individual and the society.

The purpose of this paper is to consider dharma as a value, as seen by Hindu thinkers down the ages. Explaining the evolutionary approach to the historical evolution of the concept of Dharma, the basis of Indian social thought, S. Cromwell Crawford rightly points out:

"Hindus call their religion Sanātana Dharma which means literally 'Eternal Law'. The name should in no wise suggest that ethical ideals connected with this religion are eternal in the sense of being fixed, static, unchanging substances. To the contrary, Hindu ethics, like the river Ganges, has been in a state of ceaseless flow down the ages constantly changing its course and currents relative to the hard intervening realities of Indian history. All of its fundamental presuppositions — Karman, Samsāra, dharma — have evolved from streams of thought originating in earliest times. These elements have survived to the present day not in spite of change but because of change. Thus under the rubric of eternal universal law, Hindu ethics combines continuity with dynamic diversity."¹

1 S. Cromwell Crawford. The evolution of Hindu Ethical Ideal. Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyaya, Calcutta. 1964. P X1.

The term *dharma* cannot be easily or accurately rendered into English. The term also gained new meanings throughout history and has become complex. The dictionary suggests meanings like virtue, righteousness, duty, right, morality, justice, the good, the characteristic, tradition, ordinance etc. The term in short emphasizes the duty-privilege correlation in human life. Etymologically, the word 'dharma' is related to the word 'form'-the common Sanskrit root being 'dhṛ' meaning to 'uphold, sustain, and nourish'. That which sustains the universe is dharma. Dharma is described as the cosmic principle which holds the universe together. But for it, the universe would be a chaos. To know the nature of the Indian concept of dharma, one should remember the word *ṛta* which occurs in the Vedas. This word which etymologically comes from *ṛ* meaning to go, to move, originally meant uniformity of nature or cosmic order, the maintenance of which was regarded as the essential function of the gods worshipped in that age. But it is also used there in the sense of right, suggesting that the gods were conceived as preserving the world not merely from physical disorder but also from moral discord. Thus the universe is governed by a moral law. To quote I. C. Sharma, "Ṛta represents the basic truth, harmony, system of eternal moral order of the entire universe. That which is universally true is Ṛta and that which is the opposite or false is termed anṛta. It has been the firm belief of the Indian sages that ultimately truth will be victorious because it is the basic principle. The Sanskrit quotation imprinted on our national emblem is "Satyam eva Jayate". In fact it is a part of the whole statement "Satyam eva Jayate, na anṛtam", i.e., Truth alone will win and not falsehood."² The idea underlying *ṛta* is the relation between the world of fact and the world of value, between right as physical order and right as moral rectitude. There is here a necessary relation between ethics and metaphysics.

The second concept to which dharma is related is *ṛna*, indebtedness. A human being is born with a threefold obligation—to the gods, to the sages of old, and to his ancestors. The fulfilment of these obligations should be the first aim of life. The earlier view of *ṛta* points merely to the seeking of some

2 I. C. Sharma, *Ethical Philosophies of India*, George Allen Unwin Ltd. London. 1965, p, 71.

reward in the future, the well-being of oneself or of the world or of both. The idea of *ṛna* signifies the recognition of one's indebtedness to those powers that conferred well-being in the past. No specific good as such is sought but only the good in general that motivates action. According to indian commentators, the way of repaying parental debt is to have oneself children and look after them in the same way. The seers and teachers impart knowledge and make one capable of doing all work effeciently in the world. As for the repayment of this debt the means are to study their teachings, specially the Vedas. The debt to gods is paid off by performing different sacrifices (*yajñas*). A person owns these debts the moment he is born and cannot hope for liberation unless he clears the debt.

Derived from these two notions, the term "dharma" signifies that it is the basis of all order, whether social or moral. What was originally a simple social structure came to be stratified into four *varṇas*—*Brahmaṇas*, *Kshatriyas*, *Vaishyās* and *Śudras*. Of these the *Kshatriya* or Warrior is the chief support of society. He preserves the social group from external danger and internal disorder. But physical might and external control do not adequately explain social order. To safeguard against the tyranny of the ruler, and to ensure willing response from the ruled, the need arose to create something better or higher. It is this higher principle that is dharma. Force is not the essence of government. Only right alone is true might.

The new principle is to be regarded as internal. It refers to the sense of right and wrong which is a distinct feature of human beings. Dharma also differs in accordance with the place which one occupies in society consisting of the four *varṇas*. The aim of dharma however is the good of all understood in the widest sense. Thus the five great sacrifices (*pañca-mahā-yajñas*) become incumbent on all householders who form the mainstay of society. These duties are studying the Vedas, sacrificing to the gods, presenting oblations to ancestors, honouring guests, and offering food to beasts, birds and the like. Because a person befriends all, all befriend the human being — love evokes love. Dharma does not merely keep a human being in harmony with the environment but also enables one to attain ends in life both here and hereafter. Dharma thus governs the higher

life of Indians. *Rta* and *R̥na* are incorporated in *dharma* and are inclusively transcended in this concept.

Dharma also includes ritual or religious merit which operating in an unseen manner (*adr̥ṣṭa*) secures good to a person in the future here or hereafter. Performance of certain sacrifices (*yajña*) is believed to lead the agent to heaven (*svarga*) after the present life. Certain other *yajnas* secure for the performer wealth, children and the like in this very life. Thus the *Chandogya Upaniṣad* and the *Bhagavad Gita* speak not only of almsgiving (*dāna*) and austerity (*tapas*) as *dharma* but also of sacrifice (*yajna*).

Bṛihad-āraṇyaka Upaniṣad, classifies the inmates of the world as gods (*deva*), humans (*manuṣya*) and demons (*asura*). They are all described as the children of *Praja-pati*. "They approach their father seeking instruction from him as to how they should conduct themselves. The answer is brief but it clearly indicates the necessity for grades in moral discipline according to the capacity and temperament of the persons in question. To the *asuras*, the commandment given is: "Have compassion (*dayadhvam*) for humans; to the *manuṣyas*: 'Be generous (*datta*); and to the *devas*': "Learn self-control (*dāmyata*). The first two of these prescribe regard for others as the chief principle of action. The third is unlike them and may appear to be purely individualistic; but being addressed to the best, it should be taken to presuppose the training of the other two stages."³

Ramayana and *Mahabharata* speak of two ways of life—one of natural inclination (*kama*) and the other of righteousness (*dharma*). *Kama* may appear to meet with immediate success. Yet it is *dharma* that prospers in the end. Similarly ritualistic life will be fruitful only in the case of those that are morally pure. "The *Vedas* do not cleanse the ethically unworthy" says the *Dharma Sastra*. By giving a moral basis to ritual, the Indians elevate sacrifice (*yajna*). Besides, the correct practice of ritual imposes much self-restraint and hence has a moral significance. Though *dharma* may be regarded as partly a religious notion, it is pre-dominantly moral. This is the result of blending religion with metaphysics in India.

3 M. Hiriyanna. *Outlines of Indian Philosophy*. Blakie & Sons. Pvt. Ltd. Bombay 1983, p. 76.

Morality as conceived in India by all except the materialists (Carvaka) has a reference to future life, just as much as ritual has. Eschatological considerations are not separated from worldly ones in the principles of *rīta*, *mā* and *dharma*. This is due to the doctrine of *karma* which introduces a supersensuous or extra-empirical factor, to serve as the nexus between virtue as practised here and its reward to be reaped in future lives. It thus places the concept of moral good beyond the reach of common experience (*a-laukika*) and it therefore requires a unique *pramana* (criterion) to make it known to us. According to orthodox schools (*astika-darśanas*) this *pramana* is the Veda, which is also the source of our knowledge of the efficacy of the ritual.

Broadly speaking there are three orthodox views regarding *dharma*. Some *Mīmāṃsakas* define *dharma* as action. Action, being transient, cannot by itself account for the reward to be enjoyed in future. So they believe that the act produces or appropriates effect called *apūrva* which abides in the agent, until its reward is reaped. According to the School of *Nyaya-Vaiśeṣika*, and others, it is this *apūrva* and not the action that is to be designated as *dharma*. It thus becomes a quality characterising the self. Theistic Schools believe that *dharma* is neither action nor quality but it is the grace (*prasada*) of God which comes as a consequence of our meritorious deeds.

The school of Carvaka (materialist) is supposed to have repudiated the distinction between virtue and vice and denied morality altogether. This is moral negativism. It is difficult to believe that there could ever have been a group of serious thinkers who upheld such a view. Perhaps this view is just a caricature by orthodox writers who opposed the Carvakas. Besides, the original sources of the Carvaka school are deemed to have been lost.

The idea of *dharma* in general is considered innate in *homo sapiens*, and not acquired. Only the specific forms of *dharma* are to be enquired into. Some maintain that the *pramana* for knowing particulars of *dharma* is common experience. This group subscribes to a second type of materialism which is described as enlightened (*śu-sikṣita*). This school did not deny *dharma* but accepted it in its purely secular sense. The self

here is not identified with the body but it is acknowledged as a knowing agent, enduring only so long as the body lasted. Thus this school neither denied dharma nor sought to support its validity by an appeal to any special *pramana*.

This view of morality was criticised by other schools. Kumarila, for instance, points out that seeking for a rational or empirical basis for dharma is bound to end in a purely utilitarian standard. Dharma in the sense of a means to the wholly good disappears altogether. The utmost we can have is only relative assurance. But without appeal to an absolute standard, moral life will lose nearly the whole of its inspiration. Indian schools generally believed in a surviving self and aimed at securing for it certain good not only in this life but also in future lives. Therefore the notion of secular dharma did not come to prevail.

It is on such considerations that verbal testimony (*Śabda*) has been accepted as a separate *pramana* for knowing dharma. This *pramana* goes back according to some to the intuitive vision of saints (*Yogi-pratyaksha*). This vision is considered to disclose extra-empirical facts and to make these known immediately.

In this appeal to the experience of the individual, others see a risk, for such a private insight cannot carry with it the guarantee of its own validity. This is not to impugn the good faith of the saint. It only means that the excellence of a teacher is no guarantee of the truth of his teaching. To avoid this possible defect of subjectivity, orthodox thinkers (*astikas*) postulate *Sruti* (revelation), otherwise known as the Veda, which, it is claimed will not mislead us since it has emanated from God or is supernatural in some sense or other. The *Sruti* is tradition which is looked upon as immemorial (*sanatana*) in its character, because its origin cannot be traced to any mortal human being (*anādi, a-paurushēya*). This Veda has also proved acceptable to the best minds (*mahajanas*) of the community. Thus the standard here becomes eventually a human group and not an individual. The Vedas gain thereby an objective or at least an inter-subjective status. Herein lies the superiority of *Sruti*. The seeming dogmatism is largely modified by the fact that the actual determination of particular codes of morality means a proper interpretation (*mimamsa*) of the vedic texts.

In addition to the authority of the Vedas, *smṛtis* (remembered texts) based on the Veda also become canonical. Such traditional treatises are held to go back eventually to the Veda, for their authoritative status. They represent sanctified tradition. Where both the Śruti and Smṛti refer to the same point of dharma, but differ in their teaching, preference is given to the Śruti. The authority of Smṛti is therefore final only where the Śruti is silent. Smṛtis thus serve as supplements to the Veda. The aim is to exclude empirical ethics but it continues to persist in a disguised form. Where details of dharma are involved, there is here a certain amount of dogma. But this is largely modified consciously by admitting the necessity for readjusting moral codes periodically and unconsciously by the recognition that the interpretation of Śruti and Smṛti should be reasonable. The authors of Dharma Sastras themselves have made provisions for the changes in and through their concepts of *Yuga-dharma* and *apad-dharma* (morality in a dire crisis).

There are two other criteria, as subordinate sources of dharma-knowledge. They are 1) Custom (*acara*) and 2) self-satisfaction or pleasure of conscience or feeling at peace with oneself (*atma-tuṣṭi*). *Acara* or *sad-acara*, is traditional convention or custom, the ethos of the community, which secures social approval for conduct and is exemplified in the life of the best people of the community. The exemplary life of the virtuous is thus a never-failing foundational source of dharma. If *acara* signifies social approval, *atma-tuṣṭi* represents self-approval or conscience. The conscience here is that of the disciplined and virtuous and not of the indisciplined and unregenerate. The chief aim of making *acara* and conscience, subordinate to the Veda is to make dharma independent of private individual idiosyncracies and ground it on a public community standard.

The importance of the moral idea in the Indian view of life is very considerably increased by virtue of the belief in the Karma doctrine, which has its basis in a surviving and transmigratory self. No act consciously done will ever go without its recompense to the agent. The doctrine may appear to substitute fate for the gods of old but it is a fate of which humans themselves are the cause. Karma doctrine is not a demonstrable truth. However its value as a hypothesis for explaining the observed inequalities of life is clear.

This conviction that there are no equalities in life reconciles the believer to his lot in life and explains the absence of ill-feeling so apt to follow in the wake of pain and sorrow. This also is conducive to charity in judging others. Those who succeed in life will attribute their success more to what they have done in their past lives than to what they have done in the present one.

Freedom thus means being determined by oneself. Belief in karma does not result in fatalism, as it is popularly believed. It only signifies self-determination. Destiny thus becomes only another name for deeds done in previous lives. So deep is the faith in the doctrine of karma, that some see no need to acknowledge the existence of even God conceived as the bestower of rewards! This ethical basis of the Karma-doctrine, commits one to the obligation of a truly moral life. This does not however mean that one can avoid the consequences of one's past karma. Each deed that we do leads to a double result. It produces its direct result (*phala*), the pain or pleasure following from it. It also creates a disposition (*samskara*) or tendency to repeat the same act in the future. Necessity involved in the karma doctrine is restricted to the *phala*. Samskaras are under our control and our moral progress depends on regulating these samskaras.

Theistic schools also uphold the doctrine of karma but they attribute the allotment of rewards to a just and omniscient God. These schools conceive God as a common cause only in the operation of the law of karma, and explain that the divergence in its incidence on particular individuals is determined by their respective moral desert. Thus they save God from the charge of partiality.

The Smṛtis dealing with dharma form part of a special class of treatises known as *Kalpa Sūtras*. There are three classes of these Sūtras. One of them deals with elaborate Vedic rites. Another is concerned with many simpler domestic rites. The third class, the Dharma sūtras aims to lay down the standard of dharma. Each veda has its own dharma-sūtra, which deals with rules of conduct (*acara*), penances (*prayascitta*) and law (*vyavahara*).

At a comparatively late period appear other works usually termed *smrtis*, like those of *Manu*, *Yajña valkya*, and *Parasara* which are amplifications of the earlier *sūtras*. These are metrical in character and have been commented upon at great length in successive periods. These *smrtis* treat of morality, religion and civil law. By far the most important of these is the *Manu Smṛti*. Its literary merit also is great. In recent years, P. V. Kane has ably translated these works into English in his monumental work *History of Dharma Śāstras*

In the above literature, three kinds of karma are usually recognised:

1. Obligatory deeds (*nitya-karma*)
2. Optional deeds (*kāmya-karma*)
3. Prohibited deeds (*pratisiddha-karma*)

Prohibited acts constitute a-dharma, or immoral acts, whose avoidance is no less important than the performance of moral acts. There is also another variety of karma known as occasional deeds (*naimittika-karma*). Optional deeds are concerned with the individual's well-being. They are explicitly designed to secure personal benefit here or hereafter. Desire as such is not bad but it needs to be properly controlled.

Another familiar classification of karma divides action into those pertaining to proper or improper speech, thought and action. The first and last are expressions of thought. Great emphasis is therefore laid on control of thought. Indulgence in evil thoughts will bring suffering, although they may not find expression in speech or overt action, while virtuous thoughts are of little avail until they are transformed into action.

There is also a two-fold classification of obligations and prohibitions:

1. Those described as 'general' (*sadharana dharma*)
2. Those termed special (*Varna-asrama dharma*) relative to one's social clan (*Varna*) and to the particular stage (*āśrama*) in life.

The importance of *sadharana dharma* is universally acknowledged. Their bearing is not merely on human beings but on all living creatures, which though recognised as having no duties are regarded as certainly having rights. *Manu* reckons ten general duties — contentment, forbearance, gentleness, respect

for others' property, cleanliness, self-control, knowledge, philosophic wisdom, veracity and patience. It may appear [that the note of altruism is lacking in these virtues. However the more positive virtues are brought under the varna-asrama scheme. Further, several of these cardinal virtues imply a reference to others. Thus when a person practises the virtue of contentment his conduct will result in some positive good to others. In the case of non-violence (a-himsa) when we can but do not help a person in distress, we are really injuring the person. If these duties seem negative and self-regarding, they generally point to the rights of others as their correlative. The greater emphasis placed on negative virtues only means that self-denial is the very basis of morality. This scheme of sadharana-dharma is meant to check communal egoism, seeking as it does, an equitable adjustment of the relative claims of communities in the larger ethics of humanity. The sadharana-dharmas constitute the foundation of the varna-asrama dharmas, the limits within which the latter are to be observed and obeyed.

Duties differ according to the class of society — (varna) — Brahmana, Kshatriya, Vaisya or Sudra — to which one belongs. These duties together form an integral whole of society. The co-operation of each varna is equally necessary for social well-being. Social solidarity is their essential aim. The varna ideal points to the functional division of society. In the ideal varna scheme there is no place for the superiority-inferiority feeling. The social efficacy of each functional group is given full recognition. Social stability becomes possible since each individual eminently suited to the performance of the duty that he is allotted, spontaneously gives out his best. The naturalness with which he discharges his duty adds to the ease and grace of the performance. The seer, the warrior, the tradesman, and the commoner — all are equally necessary for society. This original motive behind the varna scheme, when translated into the caste (*jati*) system became a caricature and a hideous reality. The ideal of co-operation gave place to recrimination. Conflicts and economic interest brought out all the evils of the caste system. The caste system as is found today exhibits a clear ignorance of the grand ideals propounded by the Hindu social philosophers.

Duties pertaining to the asramas (stages of effort) are aimed at self-culture rather than social service. The institution

of *aśrama*, serves as a ladder to enable one to gradually reach the final goal of life.

Dharma is thus a means to an end, the end being conceived as the attainment of prosperity in this life or in the next or both. This view was put forward in the early portions of the Veda and it persists even today especially in the popular mind. But this view was modified later in the majority of Indian schools, mainly in two directions. One direction, as in the case of Prabhakara *mimamsa*, was to consider dharma not as an instrumental value but an intrinsic value in itself. The second direction, keeps the instrumental value of dharma intact but has changed the final end it serves in one way or other.

By dharma, in this second view, is meant karma, or voluntary actions, like sacrifices (*yajna*) that are conducive to some good. These acts broadly speaking are of two types, optional (*kāmya*) or obligatory (*nitya*). Thus in the ritualistic example of *ijyotishoma* sacrifice, the *yajna* is the means to the attainment of heaven (*svarga*). No direct relation can exist between the *yajna* and the *phala*, for one has to wait till after death. To bridge the time-lag, some unseen power or capacity (*adrsta*, *apurva*) which endures in the agent until the result is attained, is here postulated. The *apurva* is described as *kalpya* (postulated) which means that there is no direct reference to it in the Veda but is only deduced as a hypothesis.

There are also activities secular as well as ritualistic with which no end result is explicitly associated as in the case of optional deeds. In such cases, the end is explained as the avoidance of some unwelcome result (*pratyavaya-parihara*). Thus in activities of the *kāmya* type, the end is positive while in those of *nitya* type it is negative.

The next change is more profound and the emphasis it lays on duty is of a different kind. There was a gradual shifting in the idea of the ultimate goal of life from that of an existence in a hypostatic heaven (*svarga*) to that of liberation (*mokṣa*) from the cycle of *samsara*. Kumarila school of *Mimamsa* adopted *svarga* as the ultimate. All other schools adopted *mokṣa* as the final goal.

The older idea that dharma is an instrumental value (*iṣṭa sadhana*) is retained but the good to which it leads is considered

as self-conquest (*sattva-śuddhi*). This betterment of character ultimately leads to *mōkṣa*. The Indian conception of the *jīva* (empirical self) is that it is a complex entity, consisting of a spiritual as well as a physical element. The nature of relationship between these elements is viewed somewhat differently in the different philosophical systems. However the physical element namely, the gross body (*sthūla śarīra*) and the subtle body (*sūkṣma śarīra*, *antakaraṇa*) are constituted of three *gunas* (*sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*). Though the *jīva*, as spirit, is itself pure, it becomes contaminated by *rajas* and *tamas*, the two lower *gunas*. The aim of moral training is to restore to the self its primal character, by first purging it of *rajas* and *tamas* and intensifying the *sattva*. Finally the *sattva* itself is to be transcended to regain the utter purity of the transcendental self.

Performance of *nitya-karma* also is conducive to the eradication of evil tendencies and helps in the destruction of past moral evil (*durita-kṣaya*). Besides performance of duty helps, through purifying character, in the realisation of *mokṣa*. The positive aim here is the highest value of self-realisation. Thus what is at stake here is the ultimate good, not this or that good in a relative sense. The merit of Hindu dharma lies in the fact that ethics and metaphysics are not sundered in the quest for final happiness or peace. Perhaps, the following quote from Helmut Golluitzer, reflects the spirit in which ethics itself is seen by Hindu sages:

"All the phenomena of this world are destined to decay with time; they cannot, therefore, confer a permanent sense on to things. It remains for man, then, to give meaning to man. But the neighbour who is just as transitory and imperfect, is not capable of furnishing this explanation — as much as it would be possible, in the practical and individual case, to attach oneself in the hope of finding the meaning of existence. Then, that humanity in its complex is more qualified to do this, a humanity that far surpasses individual duration. But this would be an abstraction of elevated grade, and one would need to close one's eyes to ignore the fact that humanity, is also a passing phenomenon, in the cosmos. To find a meaning, one must presuppose a permanent instance. Lacking this a weight is put on man and humanity which they cannot carry, a task which they cannot perform."⁴

S. N. Rao

4 Battista Moudin, *Philosophical Anthropology*, Theological Publication in India, Bangalore, 1985, p. 204.

General Note: The author has freely condensed, for the purpose of this paper, relevant portions from the following two texts:

1 S. Gopalan, *Hindu Social Philosophy*, Wiley Eastern Ltd., N. Delhi, 1979
2 M. Hiriyanna, *Indian Conception of Value*, Kavyalaya Publishers, Mysore, 1975.

Islam Demands Love and Tolerance

Faith can be seen as an ideology and as an identity. As an ideology, it fosters tolerance, love and harmony. Emphasized one-sidedly as a mark of identity, it generates conflicts and quarrels. Though Islam is often presented as an intolerant religion, it is not so. Quran wishes that all prophets be respected; it demands tolerance, unity of people and good works. Faith must be free and personal. Faith as an identity is all right; but it should not be turned into religious fanaticism.

Historically speaking human beings have lived for centuries in multi-religious or multi-ethnic societies. It is very difficult to ensure uniformity of faith or ethnicity in a human society, much less so in a modern industrial one with its own migratory inducements and shifting patterns. Faith as an identity, not as an ideology, has been one of the most powerful factors apparently responsible for much bloodshed in modern history, particularly of the third-world countries. Most of the third world countries are multi-religious, multi-ethnic and these cleavages have often caused grave situations of violence and bloodshed.

India saw a great bloodbath in 1947 when it got divided apparently on religious lines. More than a million people were slaughtered then and thousands continue to be killed even now manifestly on account of religious differences. Similarly the ethnic conflict in a far away South Africa and next door neighbour Sri Lanka is rocking our conscience. Hundreds of innocent persons are getting killed in these ethnic conflicts. It is therefore, necessary to understand not only the political and socio-economic causes of this conflict but also its religious and ideological dimensions. If communal violence is to be successfully combated it is necessary to grapple with the religious aspect of the problem too.

However, before we proceed further it is important to grasp the distinction between faith as an identity and faith as an ideology. In the medieval society it was faith as an ideology with its ritualistic orientation which held sway but in the emergent modern industrial societies of the third world it is faith as an identity which has assumed increasing significance in socio-political life. In these third world societies faith as an identity ensures greater degree of political and socio-economic power as well as greater degree of communal solidarity which is badly needed in the alienating modern societies. Thus faith as an identity has come to play ever greater role in our lives.

The distinction between faith as an ideology and faith as an identity may be quite important for social scientists and discerning minds but this distinction gets blurred in the minds of common people. When faith as an identity assumes greater importance, a few ideologues too try to make hay in its sunshine. It, therefore, becomes necessary to throw some light on faith as an ideology before we come to terms with faith as an identity. We will, in this article, first discuss from an ideological point of view the Islamic position on communal harmony in a multi-religious society.

Islamic position

It has often been assumed that Islam is intolerant of other faiths and tends to encourage communal discord. Many verses from the Quran shorn of their situational context or understanding are cited to substantiate this point of view. It is also assumed, again without much contextual understanding that it is highly politicised religion so much so that it is inseparable from politics. These powerful myths hold sway over the Muslim community as well. The Islamic position as regards these issues is quite different from this.

To live amicably among the followers of different faiths, ethnic and cultural groups is a very challenging task. All sorts of tensions both on ideological and political and socio-economic grounds keep on arising.

Nevertheless it is a challenge we are very often required to face. The Quran, it is interesting to note, is well aware of this challenge and requires of its followers to face it with courage.

and zest. It is in fact described as their 'test'. First it would be quite pertinent to quote the verse in full:

"For every one of you we appointed a law and a way. And if Allah had pleased he would have made you a single people, but that he might try you in what he gave you. So vie with one another in virtuous deeds."

This is one of the most significant verses in the Quran on communal amity in the midst of diversity of faiths, cultures, races and languages. First Allah says that for everyone he has appointed a law and a way of life. A much more significant statement has been made, i.e., if Allah so pleased he would have made all a single people (*ummatan wahidatam*) without diversity of ways and laws. But — and it is important to note — He decided to try them by giving diverse ways whether they can live in amity. Thus the Quran emphasises *unity* (of mankind) but *not* uniformity. Uniformity is not in keeping with the divine wisdom, *unity* is. This verse also goes on to say that what really matters is *virtuous deeds*. It is desirable to compete with each other in virtuous deeds, not in asserting superiority of one's faith, culture, creed or race.

It is in fact this verse which led Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad, a noted commentator on the Quran to propound the concept of separateness of *din* and *shari'ah*. According to Azad *shari'ah* (may differ from people to people depending on time and place and modes of living in differing conditions but *din* which is the essence of religion or faith is one among all. The Quran, in other words, emphasises non-particularism in matters of religion and particularism in matters pertaining to *shari'ah*. Perhaps it is the most progressive attitude one can take in this matter.

In another verse the Quran gives yet another reason for human kind having been divided into different tribes and nationalities. It says: "O mankind, surely, we have created you from a male and a female, and made you tribes and nationalities (*shu'uban*) that you may recognise each other. Surely the nobles of you with Allah is the most dutiful of you."

Thus it would be seen from the above verse that division into different tribes, nationalities and similar other groups is for the sake of identity, not for superiority, much less for promoting

any conflict or hostility. Also, the nearest and dearest to Allah is one who excelled in duties, or good deeds. Thus the Quran accepts the psychological significance of identity (the question of identity has assumed increased importance in our modern society which we do not propose to discuss here) but does not allow it to be a symbol of superiority. It is only nobility of deeds which entitles one to be proud of and nobility of deeds include all life-promoting processes. The doctrine of particularism is recognised by way of birth but it is not allowed to become a distinct mark of superiority. Needless to say, such an approach is absolutely essential for promoting harmony in a multi-religious and multi-ethnic society.

Another important condition for harmony is equal respect for all religions as well as for all ethnic groups. The Quran recognises the importance of this fundamental approach for harmony in a multi-religious society and un-equivocally proclaims:

“Say: We believe in Allah and in that which has been revealed to us, and in that which was revealed to Abraham, and Isheael and Issac and Jacob and the tribes, and in that which was given to Mosses and Jesus, and in that which was given to the prophets from their Lord, we do not make any distinction between any of them and to Him do we submit.”

Thus it is incumbent upon all Muslims to believe in all other prophets and not only this but not to make any distinction between them, i.e., to hold all of them in equal respect. There is another side of this. One people or one group should not ridicule another people or another group. Such an attitude can lead to serious breach of mutual harmony. The Quran says: “O you who believe, let not people laugh at people, perchance they may be better than they; nor let women (laugh) at women, perchance they may be better than they. Neither find fault with your own people, nor call one another nick-names.”

One religious group often ridicules beliefs of other religious groups and calls them by nick-names leading to violent conflicts as it sometimes happens in our own country. The Quran, therefore, forewarns the believers not to indulge in mudslinging in the interest of harmony and mutual respect. In the same spirit the believers, i.e., the Muslims, have been forbidden to

abuse those who worship other than Allah as it would invite sharp retaliation. The relevant verse reads:

"And abuse not those whom they call upon besides Allah, lest, exceeding the limits, they abuse Allah through ignorance. Thus to every people have we made their deeds fair-seeming."

Thus only those deeds of a people would be construed as fair which manifest themselves in restrained inter-action even with hostile religious groups. Only such a restraint is worthy of all believing people. Inter-religious harmony, according to this verse, is more precious than one's enthusiasm in believing in Allah. This is another cornerstone of the policy of religious harmony as propounded by the holy Quran.

Related to this doctrine is the doctrine of voluntary acceptance or rejection of religion. "There is no compulsion in religion", unequivocally proclaims God in the Quran. It is also said equally unequivocally: "The Truth is from your Lord, so let him who wishes believe and let him who wishes disbelieve." The same theme is repeated in the following words: "Indeed there have come to you clear proofs from your Lord: whoever will therefore see, it is for the good of his own soul, and whoever will disbelieve, it shall be against himself". The Quran also states: "For you is your faith; for me is my faith".

It is not difficult to see that there cannot be harmony between various peoples or religious groups if, apart from mutual respect, there is no sense of justice. The sense of justice should not be marred even if there is active hostility between them. It is only the sense of justice which restores amity and confidence. The Quran thus says:... "and let not hatred of a people incite you to act inequitably. Be just; that is nearer the observance of duty". This is a most difficult condition to fulfil; in fact it is lack of concern for justice that goes on reinforcing sense of hostility between two religious, rational or ethnic groups. It would not be wrong, though a bit oversimplified, to maintain that our country would not have been partitioned if this sense of justice had prevailed over that of hostility. However that was not to be and we paid the price for it.

The Quran also takes a very sober view of all not turning to the faith being preached by the Prophet. The Quran tries to

allay the subjective anxiety of the Prophet in these words: "And if thy Lord had pleased, all those in the earth would have turned faithful, all of them. Wilt thou then force men till they are believers?" Thus it is Allah's pleasure that not all should turn to one faith. Nor can one force all of them to do so. It is thus for people to promote inter-faith dialogue, inter-faith harmony, rather than try to convert all to one faith. It is the only course left for us. It would be sheer defiance of the Quranic injunction and common sense to set about converting everyone to the Islamic faith; on the contrary, it would be honouring Allah's wish to promote inter-communal harmony.

That this is Allah's desire is made abundantly clear from the following Quranic verse: "To every nation we appointed acts of devotion, which they observe, so let them not dispute with thee in the matter and call to the Lord. As Allah has appointed different ways of devotion for different nations there is no need to dispute about this. And those who are patient and fight evil with what is good would be doubly rewarded. "These will be rewarded twice", says the Quran, "because they are steadfast, and repel evil with good and spend out of what we have given them". Thus evil has to be repelled with good and hence aggression in matters of faith does not help; it aggravates the problem.

Also one has to avoid mischief at any cost. Allah does not love those who indulge in mischief, be it in any name. "...and do good (to others) as Allah has done good to these and seek not to make mischief in the land. Surely Allah loves not mischief-makers." All these verses are clear proof of the fact that the Quran does not only discourage force and compulsion in the matter of faith, but positively and assertively encourage diversity of faiths and construe this diversity as a challenge and a test for peaceful coexistence. Thus the Quranic teachings become highly relevant to our multi-religious society which has adopted secularism as the anchorsheet of its policy.

Whatever be the actual meaning of secularism, we have to interpret it in keeping with our religio-cultural reality. Although it is nearer to the true spirit of secularism to maintain equal distance from all religions, it would be nearer our ethos to interpret it as equal respect for all religions and it is in this latter sense that

secularism comes much nearer the Quranic spirit. Equal respect for all religions is fundamental to the teachings of the Quran as is clear from the foregoing verses.

There is yet another aspect which has to be borne in mind. A society consists of people whereas a country consists of people as well as a State. Secularism, as we pointed out, has two aspects: equal distance from all religions and equal respect for all religions. Now it would be in the true interest of communal harmony if the state keeps equal distance from all religions, and people show equal respect to all. All our problems stem from the fact that neither the state maintains equal distance from all religions nor do our people show equal respect for all.

Faith as an identity

Faith, as pointed out at the outset, has two aspects: ideological and psychological, i.e., that of identity. So far we have discussed the question from the ideological point of view as stated in the Quran. We now propose to throw light on this question from the viewpoint of identity.

As far as our country is concerned it is not the practice of religion that causes acute problems but the assertion of religious identity (though of course assertion of religious identity manifests itself also through practice of certain rituals and this aspect can also not be underrated). And assertion of religious identity is more often for secular rather than religious purposes. In a democratic set-up like that of India where votes and numbers count, such an assertion provides a religious community with an important leverage. The political and religious elite within the community promote this sense of religious identity more and more aggressively. Such an attitude starts an unhealthy competition between rival communities, the assertion of their respective identities leading to severe communal strains.

In a modern democratic polity such an assertion of communal identity, whatever the consequent problems, is, in a way, inevitable. It is a universal phenomenon. Both the developing and developed countries are experiencing it. Nor is it confined to our era alone (though in our times it has acquired certain unique features and political overtones). Such an assertion was prevalent in the medieval period also. Ibn Khaldun's theory of

asabiyyah (groupism) is nothing but an assertion of tribal identity.

Assertion of communal identity certainly acquires sharper edge in a democratic society as such a society gives greater consciousness of rights not only to profess and practise one's religion but also to have due share of political power as well as of economic development. In a democratic set-up communal polarization greatly helps in fighting for the perceived share of power and economic development and this fight often leads to unmanageable communal conflict. Often closely related communities also get communally polarized on such issues and violently fight against each other. The Hindu-Sikh conflict falls into this latter category.

Hindus and Sikhs are much closer to each other religiously and in Punjab, also linguistically and culturally. Even in the Indian Constitution they were bracketed (it is only recently, after the conflict broke out that the latter demanded deletion of this from the Constitution). They had stood together vis-à-vis Muslims on the question of partition. Yet they violently fought against each other and this violent conflict between the two closely connected communities developed when the Sikhs started perceiving a strong sense of injustice at the hands of Hindus.

Another instance of violent conflict between closely connected communities is the conflict between the Shi'as and Sunnis both in India and Pakistan. Violence often breaks out between these two communities in Lucknow in India and Karachi in Pakistan. Such clashes have frequently occurred in Karachi recently. Recently even Pathans and Bihari Muslims, both predominantly Sunni, fought against each other in Karachi. More than 50 Pathans were killed. Purely secular issues were involved.

Thus we see that one has to distinguish between faith as an identity and faith as an ideology although both aspects are closely inter-related. In modern secular society the conflict often breaks out not on account of faith as an ideology but faith as an instrument of communal identity and the conflict becomes sharper, if the perceived injustice is greater. It is for this reason that, as is often observed, such conflicts are actively led by the secular rather than the religious elite of the communities

involved although the involvement of the latter is not completely ruled out. The whole movement for Pakistan was led by the secular elite of the Muslim community.

The Quran, therefore, rightly emphasises that one must be just even to one's own enemy and enmity with a community should not lead to perpetration of injustice against it. We have already quoted the relevant Quranic verse in this respect. Even if there is active hostility, its edge can be considerably blunted if one of the communities shows the generosity of being just to the other.

In fact justice is the root cause of such conflicts. Communal prejudices act as powerful vehicle and emotional tool; These are not the root causes as often perceived.

Is the communal conflict avoidable? No social conflict is unavoidable and inevitable. Yet the whole human history is full of such conflicts. Why? Every society has its quota of vested interests. These vested interests could be political, religious or socio-economic. Conflict situations are either created or taken advantage of by these interests. When their hold becomes precarious they tend to provoke such divisive conflicts and bring about communal polarization. This not only guarantees their leadership, but also enables them to control socio-economic resources.

There is basically nothing wrong with communal identities. Besides, such identities can play creative roles especially in a democratic set-up. A true democratic set-up is supposed to promote full flowering of all communities, their languages and their cultures. This objective could be achieved only if one earnestly takes pride in one's religious, linguistic and cultural identity. It would be in fact quite wrong to demand obliteration of different identities in the name of secularism. Such a demand can only lead to fascistic tendencies in society.

However, one should note that it is a great deal more complex matter than one imagines. Encouraging distinct identities can also lead to divisive tendencies to be taken advantage of by vested interests, as pointed out above. The danger of divisive tendencies on the lines of communal identities is as great as it is necessary to cultivate them in a true democratic spirit. Sense of identity has both creative and progressive as well as divisive and regressive aspects.

Each religio-cultural complex has its genius which enriches human civilization in its own way. It is therefore patently wrong to demand assimilation of all cultures into one. Islam and Muslims have made a great deal of contribution to Indian culture and in turn they have been profoundly influenced by it. They have also developed a unique identity which is neither purely Arabo-Islamic nor purely Indian. They are justly proud of this

composite identity and would like to retain it. It is also interesting to note that the Muslim personal law has become one of the symbols of this identity and hence any suggestion of change or interference arouses their strong resentment.

Minorities, it has been noticed, are far more sensitive to the question of their identity for understandable reasons. They are more apprehensive of their religion and culture. And, precisely in this lay the other danger of identity becoming aggressive and status-quoist. The vested interests who wish to perpetuate the status quo take advantage of this sensitivity and bring about communal polarization against introducing any change. This is what we have been witnessing in the Shah Bano case also. The Supreme Court judgement has been exploited to the fullest by religious as well as political vested interests among the Muslims. No doubt personal law is an integral part of Muslim identity and its obliteration would be justly resented. However, it does not mean that no change is called for and all misuses should be allowed in its name! It is high time a serious thought is given to bring about necessary changes in keeping with the true spirit of Quran. A creative and progressive approach is highly necessary. Any attempt at meaningful change is being opposed as anti-Islamic to arouse community's ire. The *shari'ah* is not immutable. It is as much based on human opinion (*rai, qiyas*) as on the injunctions contained in the Quran. Whereas the latter is immutable, the former is certainly not. It is mutable to the extent it is based on human opinion such as has been recognized by eminent Islamic thinkers like Muhammad Abduhu of Egypt, Syed, Justice Amir Ali, Iqbal and others.

Despite these dangers faith as an identity has to be respected, even encouraged while simultaneously struggling for meaningful change. Life as such is full of dilemma and this dilemma will also have to be squarely faced. This dilemma becomes more acute in a secular, democratic society comprising numerous religious groups. In such a society, in order to protect and promote communal harmony on the one hand and respect for all norms of secular, democratic society on the other, one has to concede something in order to gain something more meaningful. This might often lead to tensions but such tensions can be creative. Purity of faith as demanded by ideologues has never been historically practised, not even in the earlier era of Islam. Empirical reality did influence it. Stress on purity of faith in a modern democratic and secular society can lead to impossible situations. Pragmatic adjustments are called for to pass the test of successfully facing the challenge of multi-religious society as required of the faithful by the Quran.

The Splendour of Truth (Veritatis Splendor)

Veritatis Splendor, the encyclical of Pope John Paul II signed by the Pope on 6th August and released on 5th October this year is a long and eagerly awaited document on certain fundamental questions concerning the Church's moral teaching. It consists of a total of 120 articles*, including an introduction (1-5), three chapters (6-117) and a conclusion (118-120). This article is a summary of the main concerns of the encyclical, followed by certain comments. It will, we hope, benefit those who do not have the time and patience to read through the encyclical itself. It can also be a reference to the comments which follow. Since the 'weight' of the encyclical is largely borne by the second chapter, we too have focussed on that.

Introduction (1-5)

The splendour of truth shines in all God's creatures, but especially in the human, created in the image and likeness of God (Gen 1:26). And through faith in Jesus, 'the true light that enlightens everyone' (Jn 1:9) people become children of God (Eph 5:8); and are made holy by their obedience to the truth (1 Pet 1:22). However, this obedience is rendered difficult by the consequences of sin, and humans follow false theories without regard for truth. The Church is aware of her duty to present clearly the way of truth, to help people distinguish correctly between good and evil. She has been always doing this. However, today a new situation has arisen within the christian community itself where numerous doubts and objections regarding the church's moral teaching have come into vogue. It is no matter merely of an occasional dissent, but of an overall and systematic calling into question of traditional moral doctrine, on the basis of certain anthropological and ethical presuppositions(4). It is to respond to this situation that the

* Numbers given in brackets refer to the articles of the encyclical.

encyclical has been written. Therefore it deals with certain fundamental questions regarding the church's moral teachings, providing necessary discernment about the debated issues in the light of Sacred Scripture and the living Apostolic Tradition. The encyclical is directly addressed to all the Bishops of the catholic Church, who share with the Pope the responsibility for safeguarding sound teaching(5).

I. Jesus Christ, answer to our moral quest (6-27)

This chapter shows that Jesus is the answer to our moral quest. This is done by reflecting and elaborating on the dialogue between Jesus and the rich young man who came to him asking what he should do in order to attain eternal life (Mt 19:16 ff.)

The rich young man's question shows that the good is closely related to life. Morality is a matter which has close bearing on life, its meaning and its fullness. The young man of the Gospel is in fact the representative of all, for all experience within them this quest for life, meaning and good. Consciously or not, attracted by the absolute good, people come to Christ, and the Church was established by God precisely to make this encounter with Christ possible for all people.

Since only God is good, only He can answer the question as to what is good. And God has already given the answer "by the law inscribed in the human heart" (Rom 2:15), namely, natural law. Natural law is the light of understanding infused in us by God whereby we understand what must be done (what is good) and what must be avoided (what is evil). This light and this law is given to every human at his very creation. Hence, it is natural to everyone. God gave this law to Israel when he gave them the "ten commandments" at Sinai while making a covenant with them (Exod. 19-24).

Jesus' answer to the young man "If you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments" (Mt 19:17) shows the importance of the decalogue and the relationship between eternal life and obedience to the commandments. Though Jesus explicitly mentions only some of the commandments, they stand for the whole decalogue. These commandments aim at protecting "the singular dignity of the human person, the only creature God

wants for its own sake''. By this, Jesus is not putting the love of neighbour above the love of God for they are inseparably united (cfr. Mt 22:40; 1 Jn 4:20). Jesus brings the commandments to fulfilment by interiorizing their demands and challenging his followers for the most generous mode of response as envisaged in the sermon on the mount (Mt. 5:17-48), which is the *magna charta* of the Gospel morality.

The young man of the Gospel expressed his yearning for something greater than just the fulfilment (as he had understood it) of the commandments when he said that he had fulfilled all those commandments. Then Jesus told him that if he wanted to be perfect, he must go and sell all his property and give the money to the poor, and then come to follow him (Mt 19:21). Between the call to obedience to the commandments and that to beatitudes there is no separation or opposition. The beatitudes have an openness that challenges us to the horizon of perfection. They suppose a generous measure of compliance with the commandments and more. In fact, the beatitudes are self-portrait of Jesus and hence invitations to closer discipleship and communion with him (16). This supposes mature and free self-giving and thus shows how much human freedom can grow and bear fruit in response to God's law. This invitation to growth and perfection is not confined to some individuals or a small group of individuals, but meant for everyone (18). Evidently Jesus' call transcends the aspirations and abilities of humans; they need the help of God, to whom everything is possible (Mt 19:26).

Jesus' conversation with the young man, though in a different manner, continues in every period of history, including our own in and through the church. And, in the Church the living Magisterium alone authentically interprets the word of God (25).

II. Discernment of certain tendencies in the present-day Moral Theology (28-83)

The Church makes her moral reflection always in the light of Christ. She has faithfully preserved not only what is to be believed but also what concerns moral life. And in the sphere of moral teaching she has achieved certain development analogous to the one regarding the truths of faith. The Church also appreciates the work being done by moral theologians.

But in the theological debates following the Council, there have developed certain interpretations of christian morality which are not consistent with sound teaching. In this situation, without imposing on the faithful any particular system of thought, the Magisterium has the duty to state that some trends of thinking are incompatible with revealed truth (28-29).

The encyclical then takes up the major topics that have been the subject of debate and discussion in contemporary fundamental moral theology, discusses and corrects/warns against them in the light of the traditional catholic moral teaching. The major topics are: freedom and law, conscience and truth, fundamental option and mortal sin, and proportionalism and object-morality.

1. Freedom and law

A key issue in contemporary moral discourse is freedom. People today are very sensitive about their freedom in its various aspects. The church also respects and supports the genuine freedom of people as it is clear from her teachings (e.g., *Pacem in Terris*, Pastoral Const. on the Church in the Modern World, Declaration on Religious Freedom etc.). But certain currents of thought extol freedom to such an extent that it is absolutised and becomes a source of values. Consequently, one's conscience becomes the criterion of good and evil independent of any objective, universal moral norms. The inescapable claims of truth disappear and are replaced by the claims of sincerity and authenticity. Thus, there emerges a radically subjective conception of morality, leading to a crisis of moral truth (31-32). At the same time, the encyclical notes, there are also positions which question the very existence of freedom; for example, behaviouristic psychology. But without freedom we cannot speak of morality in the true sense, for only in freedom can man turn to what is good. What is required is genuine freedom. Because, though every individual has the right to make his own search for the truth, there is a prior moral obligation to seek the truth and to adhere to it when found. In the words of Cardinal Newman, a staunch defender of the rights of conscience, "Conscience has rights because it has duties (34)."

Hence, genuine freedom has to respect its duty towards the (moral) truth, the good and the bad. Further, it belongs to

God, not to us, to decide what is good and what is evil. The law of God, who alone is good and knows what is good or bad for man, therefore does not reduce or negate human freedom, but only protects and promotes it.

Still, a conflict is alleged to exist between freedom (autonomy) and law. The influence of this trend is visible also in catholic moral theology to some extent. It seems to have resulted from the desire (encouraged by the council) to foster dialogue with other cultures emphasizing the rational character of morality, or, from the claim of complete sovereignty of reason made by others in the moral sphere. Besides, some moral theologians make a distinction between an autonomous, this-worldly ethical order and an order of salvation consisting only of certain attitudes and intentions. Such distinction denies any specific, valid moral content to Divine Revelation. Hence it also denies the Church's competence to speak about (human) morality. All such autonomy of reason, says the encyclical, is contrary to catholic teaching (35-37). While the Church teaches that human reason can discover and apply moral norms, it also teaches that divine wisdom and eternal law is the source of all moral law. Autonomy of reason therefore cannot generate its own norms and values(40).

In fact, man can discover what the law of God requires because it is written in his heart (Rom 2:15), namely, in natural law. Here the encyclical refers to different interpretations given to 'nature' and especially to the objections of physicalism and naturalism levelled against the traditional concept of natural law. That is, emphasis is given to biological processes rather than to meaningful human choices. The encyclical counters this objection by saying that the human person himself is a unity of soul and body and the laws based on such a corporeo-spiritual nature imply not merely physical processes but a rational order meant to protect the good of the whole person (45-50). Hence the alleged dichotomy between freedom and nature (natural law) is also unwarranted.

There are then those who deny the universality and immutability of natural law precepts on the basis of the human changing (historical) condition and cultural relativism. To them the encyclical emphatically reacts saying that the human

is not exhaustively defined by any culture. In fact, there is in him something that transcends all cultures and eras, namely, the human nature itself. The moral laws flowing from that nature are immutable and valid for all. However, the encyclical admits the need of expressing those laws in historically relevant ways (51-53).

2. Conscience and truth

The debate regarding the relationship between freedom and law is very closely related to the reality of conscience where the law of God is written, which the human is supposed to obey. But according to some theologians, says, the encyclical the laws written on conscience can help only for a general evaluation of one's action, not for concrete assessment because these general laws do not and cannot foresee all the individual and unique factors relevant to such an assessment. Hence, conscience has to play a "creative role" to make concrete assessment of one's actions here and now. Some also hold that conscience matures by such creative actions. Further, concrete circumstances can legitimize certain exceptions to the general rule and thus permit one to do in good conscience what is intrinsically evil. Thus an opposition is created, at least in some cases, between a moral precept and the norm of an individual conscience. On this basis an attempt is made to justify also the so-called "pastoral solutions" contrary to the teaching of the Magisterium. The encyclical strongly warns against such approaches to conscience and calls for a true discernment concerning the creative understanding of conscience in the light of the relationship between freedom and law, based on truth, as explained earlier (54-56).

Then, following the teaching of St. Paul (Rom 2:14-15), the encyclical reminds all that conscience is a witness within humans of their own rectitude or iniquity; it is at the same time a herald and witness of God and His law. The universal obligation of natural law becomes a particular obligation for the individual here and now through his conscience. Hence conscience is the proximate norm of personal morality. Therefore, its maturity is measured not by its liberation from objective truth but by an insistent search for truth and readiness to be guided by that truth. Thus, the link between freedom

and truth is manifest also in the judgment of a responsible conscience (57-61).

Reiterating the traditional teaching, the encyclical admits the possibility of erroneous conscience, vincible and invincible. Though one is not culpable for an invincible error, the judgment of such an erroneous conscience should not be considered equivalent to that of a right conscience. And evidently, all have the duty to form correct consciences by being converted to the Lord, developing virtuous attitudes and listening to the church and her Magisterium (62-64).

3. Fundamental option and mortal sin

Some authors speak of a distinction and even a separation between fundamental option which refers to one's radical and indepth commitment to God and particular moral choices. A person can remain faithful to God and morally good by virtue of his fundamental option for God even if he deliberately commits particular acts contrary to God's law. Further, according to this position, a deliberate violation of a grave commandment becomes a mortal sin only if it involves a reversal of fundamental option. While acknowledging the significance and meaningfulness of the idea of fundamental option, the encyclical warns against a separation between fundamental option and particular choices. It also clearly states that mortal sin should not be reduced to an act (reversal) of fundamental option. Mortal sin is committed when a person knowingly and willingly chooses something seriously disordered. Hence, fundamental option can be radically changed by particular choice (65-70).

4. Proportionalism and object morality

An act is morally good only if it conforms to the true good of man as established by the eternal law (i.e., Divine Wisdom) which is known to man by natural reason and divine revelation. Hence, morality consists in the rational ordering of the human act to the good in its truth and the voluntary pursuit of that good. Because of this ordering towards the good and to God the supreme good, morality has a teleological character.

But today there are certain teleological theories which go against the teaching of the Church, namely, consequentialism and proportionalism. Moral criterion of the former is the

consequences — good or bad — of the act. For the latter, the proportion between the good effects and the bad effects of a choice is the criterion of morality. In an imperfect world, inhabited by sinful and limited human beings, good is often linked to evil (e.g., conflict situations). As a rule, one should avoid causing such evils (e.g.: death, loss of property, injury, falsehood etc. which are also forbidden by the Decalogue). However, bringing about such evils for the sake of attaining what is good (e.g: saving a life, lessening a burden in life, protecting one's reputation etc. which are directly or indirectly demanded by the Decalogue) may be permitted and justified provided there is proportion between the good attained and the evil caused. If there is proportion and hence justification for the action, then the evil caused is called premoral (or ontic or non-moral) evil, not a moral evil. On the contrary, if there is no proportion between the good and the bad (i.e., greater evil than good will be caused), then the action may not be done. If done, it will be a moral evil (cfr. 71-75). Put in simple terms, this is what proportionalism proposes.

This theory is evidently incompatible with several "principles" accepted in the traditional catholic moral theology.

1) In traditional moral theology, *object* of the act has been the primary and decisive determinant of morality while proportionalism gives equal prominence also to the *intention* of the agent. Therefore, the new theory is accused of subjectivism and of the undermining of the objectivity of morality. 2) Since proportionalism permits pre-moral evil for the sake of proportionate good, it goes also against the maxim that "the end does not justify the means" (cfr. Rom 3:8). 3) Since traditional moral theology determined the morality of an act decisively by its object, apart from the intention of the agent and circumstances, it considered some actions (e.g., those of the negative precepts of the Decalogue) as *intrinsically evil*, i.e., always and everywhere evil. They cannot be justified under any consideration. Proportionalism does not admit such intrinsically evil acts. Because of all these flaws, especially its negation of intrinsically evil acts, proportionalism is censured by the encyclical (76-83).

III. For the life of the Church and the World (84-117)

Only the freedom that submits to truth leads us to genuine good. In the contemporary culture the bonds between good, truth and freedom is very much lost, resulting in various inhuman practices like abortion, violation of human rights etc. Hence, it is a special task of the Church today to help humans rediscover the bonds. She does this by helping people to form right moral conscience through various pastoral cares and especially the contemplation of the crucified Lord who made a complete surrender of his freedom. Human freedom is both a gift and a task, it has to be responsibly cultivated. For this, "freedom itself needs to be set free"; it is Jesus who makes us truly free (84-87).

The present day separation of freedom and truth is the manifestation of another dichotomy, that is, between faith and morality. In a widely dechristianized world even believers judge and decide by secular norms which are contrary to the Gospel. They forget that the truth of faith is to be lived. Through moral life, faith has to become a witness, even to the extent of martyrdom. Christian martyrdom is a further confirmation of the existence of intrinsically evil acts with which there shall be no compromise. The lives of martyrs found in the Old and New Testaments were affirmations of the inviolability of God's law and of the holiness of the church. They also confirm the unacceptability of consequentialist and proportionalist ethical theories which deny the existence of absolute negative precepts. The encyclical finally reminds us that the absoluteness of the moral good is acknowledged not only by Christians, but also by the great religious and sapiential traditions of both East and West (88-94).

The contemporary society which is full of corruption and injustice needs a radical renewal, both personal and social, inspired by moral sense which is itself rooted in the religious sense. What is required for this is not a weakening of moral truth, but a profound and forceful presentation of it. The Church does it so with charity and understanding for human weakness. However, one's weakness should not be made the criterion of moral truth. On the contrary, let everyone be aware of his

limits and sinfulness, and beg of God grace and mercy which He never fails to give. Nor should it be thought that the Church's moral teaching is only an ideal which can be adapted and adjusted to one's concrete possibilities. What is taught and proposed by the church can be attained by all redeemed by Christ and sustained by the Spirit. In the context of the new evangelization, when the church forcefully presents and proclaims the moral teaching of the Lord, let all believers, united and strengthened by the Spirit, respond very positively according to the model of the Virgin Mother of God and the Saints (95-108).

The encyclical then reminds moral theologians of their duty to instruct the faithful and especially future pastors in the moral teaching authoritatively given by the church. They should also provide deeper understanding and appropriate explanation, if needed, of the church's moral teaching. They are also reminded of giving loyal assent, internal and external, to the teaching of the Magisterium. The Bishops are also reminded of their duty to see that the moral teaching of the church is faithfully handed down by all concerned (110-117).

Conclusion (118-120)

The Pope concludes the encyclical by entrusting the joys and sufferings of our life and the search of moralists to Mary, the Mother of Mercy. God's mercy which was revealed in Jesus Christ who came to save, not to condemn, always strengthens us for renewed life in the Spirit. Though there are complex issues and discussions at the theoretical level, christian moral life has a simplicity. It consists in following Jesus Christ, surrendering ourselves to him so that we may be transformed by his grace. And Mary who was chosen by God to be the Mother of His son and totally surrendered herself to God's plan is the best model of christian moral life. Being our mother too, she fully understands us and guides us along the path of truth, which is also the task of the Church.

Comments

The purpose of the 'comments' is to highlight some of the main insights of the encyclical and to make certain observations about the themes discussed in it in order to help people to a better understanding of them. For lack of space our comments are limited to the first two chapters of the encyclical.

The encyclical is to be appreciated and welcomed for several reasons. The church has in recent times released several documents about specific moral issues like contraception, social justice, abortion, euthanasia, artificial reproduction etc. But none has been published on issues of fundamental moral theology, though the teachings on specific issues had implications for it. *Veritatis Splendor* fills that gap. Nobody is likely to feel that a papal teaching on fundamental issues in moral theology today is a luxury. In a culture that is becoming more and more consumerist and pleasure-seeking the importance of moral laws, right understanding of freedom, correct formation of conscience, the challenge of Gospel morality etc. which all have bearing on the whole moral sphere, need to be emphasized. The encyclical does that too.

Further, the discussion that has been going on in fundamental moral theology about a few issues we saw earlier has generated some confusion, especially in the minds of non-specialists, regarding the compatibility of certain emerging theories with the traditional tenets and approaches. Learning how the official Magisterium thinks about those issues is a need of the whole church. The encyclical fulfils that need. For Bishops, to whom it is directly addressed, the encyclical will be mainly useful to discriminate what is unacceptable in the contemporary debate in fundamental moral theology. For non-specialists, who are familiar with the debated issues, it will serve to dispel the ambiguity and uncertainty that may be in their minds regarding those topics. For moral theologians, it serves as a guide (apparently also as a warning) in their theological endeavours. The encyclical will also be a stimulus for further study and clarification of the themes dealt with.

To those general positive features of the encyclical a general negative one has to be added: the encyclical leaves moral theologians and their work rather in a bad light. The discussion on censured opinions begins by referring to "some theologians" or more frequently to certain "trends", "currents" or "theories", supposedly proposed by moral theologians (or ethicists). This as well as the general tone of the encyclical gives the impression that moral theologians are fomenting trouble in the field of christian morality by proposing new theories or making new approaches. It would have been much better if

their attempts were seen as strivings and struggles for a more realistic and adequate approach to christian morality. We know that the Council itself called for a renewal in moral theology, which implies multi-dimensional endeavours such as biblical, hermeneutical, methodological. Certain ambiguities and confusion (more theoretical than practical) are inevitable in such a search-renewal-growth process. However, the encyclical's reaction to it seems to be disproportionately negative. Besides, it can also be asked whether there are so many catholic moral theologians holding on to theories, such as formulated and censured by the encyclical, as to call it "an overall and systematic calling into question of traditional moral doctrine..."(4). With these general comments, we shall pass on to certain specific observations.

1. *The first chapter* of the encyclical provides a beautiful biblical introduction and basis for christian morality. It gives an added impetus to moral theologians to nourish moral theology with Sacred Scripture, as demanded by the Council (Priestly Formation: 16). Its presentation of Jesus as the model of christian morality, the following of Jesus as our moral task, love as the fundamental and pervading moral attitude and norm for action should contribute to the renewal that is taking place within moral theology today. By clearly stating that the keeping of precepts of the Decalogue is a basic requirement of practising love, the encyclical shows the unity of Old Testament and New Testament moralities both of which are based on the covenant. It also reminds us that love is not just a shapeless feeling or emotion, but respect and constructive concern for the other. In the practice of love, the christian is challenged to be as generous and self-less as Jesus. This challenge is not confined to some but open to all. Hence, christian morality is to be freed from minimalism. Consequently, there are no "storeys" or "classes" in christian morality. All are invited to the heights of love and perfection. By stressing the relationship between obedience to the commandments and eternal life, the encyclical also warns against possible tendencies (not shared by catholic moral theologians) to consider salvation as purely other worldly and morality as purely this worldly. They are closely interrelated, at least in the christian conception.

2. *The second chapter*, though long and taxing, is the most important one in the light of the declared purpose of the encyclical, namely, providing a necessary discernment about debated issues. Here the approach is based on natural law and at the same time Magisterium-centered, with some sprinkling of biblical texts. The first section of the chapter emphatically speaks about the need of shaping human freedom with proper regard for the commandments of God. The call for moral sensitivity and sense of responsibility is well made.

3. *Natural Law*

The emphasis on natural law which becomes very forceful here runs throughout the whole chapter. No catholic moral theologian would deny the relevance of natural moral law. However, many of them criticize the *physicalism* and *biologism* of the traditional concept of natural law. That is, the natural ordination and tendencies of bodily and biological processes become the criteria of moral obligations. For example, sexual union has a natural ordination (though not always realized) to procreation; therefore, respecting this natural ordination becomes a moral obligation always. Hence, any artificial attempt to block its ordination to procreation (such as artificial contraception) is forbidden by natural law. The teaching is defended by the argument that the human is a unity of body and soul, and hence bodily processes (e.g., sexual union) are very closely related to corresponding personal and spiritual values (e.g., love and life). Therefore, interference with this biological process, for however serious a reason, will be an action against the said values. The encyclical (as certain earlier church teachings) adds that this is not biologism but "the rational order whereby man is called by the Creator" (50) to regulate his life and actions including those of his body. Then critics would ask why in this "rational order" biological process with its natural ordination is given so much weight while other important values of marital life like the sexual life of the partners, their love relationship, the financial well-being of the family etc., are given little or no consideration. In the absence of a satisfactory answer to this question, the critics are likely to insist that the "order" appears to be more biological than rational.

4. *Conscience*

The second chapter in its second section discusses the need for conscience being formed and informed by truth, namely, the truths of morality as expressed by the commandments. At the same time, it draws attention to the opinion of some theologians who assign a "creative role" to conscience (55). Of course, conscience does not create values and norms, but makes moral judgments in the light of its moral knowledge. Hence the need of having correct knowledge. However, the encyclical presumes that such knowledge about the various concrete moral issues and situations in life is always readily available and that the demands of natural law and the Decalogue are easily grasped by everyone in sufficient detail so as to leave no ambiguity or doubt about any moral issue.

Today's world, with its complex life-situations and moral challenges, exposes one to several conflict situations where individual conscience, guided by moral laws, has to make its prudent and responsible judgment about one's concrete moral

obligation. In other words, conscience has to be faithful to moral laws; but it is not merely a "mechanical applier" of laws. It has to play a constructive role, at least in some cases, in order to function properly as the "proximate norm of personal morality" (60). By this conscience is not set against moral laws but discerns its obligation properly.

While duly respecting the emphasis on, and concern for (objective) truth, we should also note the dignity and respect due to a sincerely functioning conscience. It is in one's personal conscience, the innermost recesses of the human, that God's law resounds (54; *Gaudium et Spes* 16). This conscience is a person's immediate moral guide and he is answerable to it. As the Book of Wisdom (17:11) and St. Paul (Rom. 2:15) teach us, it is conscience, not law, that accuses the wicked or excuses the nonguilty. That is, after all, a person will have only his sincere and certain conscience to hold on to, and no law or human authority can be a substitute for it. This is another aspect of the dignity and significance of personal conscience, which is a constitutive element of the very dignity of the human person (G. S. 16). In affirming this aspect of the dignity of conscience the encyclical lags far behind the teaching of the Council (cfr. *Religious Freedom* 1-3; G. S. 16).

5. Fundamental option

Regarding fundamental option, discussed in the third section of the second chapter, the encyclical does not seem to add anything significantly new to what has been given earlier, especially in the apostolic exhortation *Reconciliation and Penance* of 1984. That mortal sin should not be reduced to the reversal of fundamental option and that fundamental option can be changed by particular choices contrary to any grave commandment are emphasized as before. Does this mean that every particular choice contrary to a grave commandment necessarily results in a mortal sin? The encyclical does not seem to say so.

6. Proportionalism

Proportionalism and intrinsic evil, discussed in the last section of the second chapter, is probably the most vexed question for the encyclical.

According to traditional catholic moral theology, there are three sources of morality — object, intention and circumstances. And the moral species (morally good or bad) of an act is primarily decided by its object, i.e., the immediate effect towards which it is ordained. For example, killing, which results in the privation of somebody's life, is bad. The moral species of the act determined by the object cannot be changed by the other two sources of morality.* Hence, an act which is bad

* Certain complexities are ignored here.

by its object has been called "intrinsically evil", that is, always and everywhere evil.

Then, what about conflict situations? Say, one had to kill another in self-defence. Traditional moral theology tackles this problem by resorting to the "Principle of Double Effect", according to which this killing is indirect. That is to say, what the agent directly willed was self-defence, and the killing was an inevitable concomitant that was tolerated. At any rate, killing in this particular situation stands justified. Is killing then intrinsically (always and everywhere) evil? ask proportionalists. No, because it is justified in self-defence (also in just wars and in the punishing of criminals). So they make a distinction.* If by killing we mean deprivation of the life of any person, it cannot be intrinsically evil, as we saw above. But, if we formulate it excluding possible legitimate exceptions, it can be considered intrinsically evil, e.g., *killing the innocent*.

Looked at this way, several familiar formulations of the precepts of the Decalogue — e.g., do not kill, do not tell lies etc. — cannot adequately be qualified as intrinsically evil. Such insufficiently formulated norms are called "material norms". They can be adequately reformulated — e.g., do not kill the innocent, do not deny truth to the one who has a right to it — so as to be termed intrinsically evil. Norms so reformulated are called "synthetic norms". In proportionalist terms, actions forbidden by "material norms" are only premoral evils and can be permitted for proportionate reasons, while actions forbidden by "synthetic norms" are moral evils and hence there is no justification for doing them. According to this view, the norm: "do not resort to artificial contraception" is only a material norm (and hence can be permitted for proportionate reason), while 'do not do artificial contraception injuring the good of marriage and family' may be qualified as a synthetic norm. Many proportionalists think that the church, because of her rigidity in sexual morality, will not approve of this approach in sexual morality even if she comes to accept it in other areas of morality.

Further, one must have already noted the significance of 'intention' even in the traditional catholic moral theology, e.g., in the (good) intention of self-defence justifying the (bad) act of "killing". For another example from the traditional position, an act which is good objectively will be wholly bad if done solely with a bad intention (e.g., giving alms with the sole motive of vain glory). So, even the object-centered tradition sometimes gives great importance to intention. With such roots in the tradition (including St. Thomas) and on account of the influence

* Proportionalism has certain nuances within it, but are not important here.

of personalism, value-ethics etc., several catholic moral theologians have been questioning the primacy accorded to the object in the moral assessment of an act in catholic tradition. Now they argue that the intention of the agent should also be given equal importance (for simplifying discussion we have left out 'circumstances'). It is also argued that in an action, the intention of the agent is the end for which the action is undertaken; the action itself (object) is only the means for the end. Hence the greater significance of intention.

Therefore, an act shall be judged good or bad only after assessing the object and intention together. If both are good, evidently the act is good; if both are evil, of course, the act is bad. If the object is bad and the intention good, the morality of the act depends on the proportion between the good and the evil of the act. (However, if the intention is bad, the act will be bad, even if the object is good. In this the old and the new positions are in accord). In short, qualifying acts as intrinsically good or bad by their objects alone is not correct methodology. This calls into question several of the traditional absolutes (intrinsic evils).

However, this does not mean that all objectively bad acts can be justified. Some acts are considered to be so bad by their objects that possibly no good intention can justify them. Such sins are very few and there is no unanimous list. Some usually proposed sins are: denial of faith, hatred of God, blasphemy and seduction. No good intention can justify the deliberate commission of these sins. What about the grave prohibitions of the Decalogue? They are virtually always binding, answer proportionalists. That is, their violation can be justified, but very rarely and for proportionate reasons only. Despite sounding "radical", proportionalism does not easily permit acting against negative precepts. Since it gives equal emphasis to the object, it cannot be simply accused of undermining the objectivity of morality. Though a lot of theoretical discussion is going on, "applied discussion" is still limited to a few conflict situations.

Compared to the rigid deontological method of the traditional moral theology, proportionalism is more flexible and better "equipped" to deal with complex moral issues. But there is the risk of sliding into subjectivism; besides, comparing values from different areas is not an easy task. Hence, the warnings of the encyclical are to be borne in mind. Thus, steering clear of such risks, it can enrich moral theological methodology.

Book Reviews

Michael J. Himes & Kenneth R. Himes, ofm, *Fullness of Faith, The Public Significance of Theology*, New York: Paulist Press, 1993, pp 213, \$ 14.95.

This book departs from the traditional policy of Catholic theologians of interpreting faith to believing Catholics alone, and endeavours to make Christian theology relevant to all Christians envisioning a "public church", communicating whatever is useful and necessary for the harmonious exercise of social life or Christian life. But it does not go looking for the lowest common denominator for a civic religion. The book, in fact, addresses two common challenges of modern life to religion, secularism and privatization. Enough scientific studies have exploded the myth of a purely "secular person" and shown that contrary to all appearance the power of religion in its appeal to persons is growing. Similarly privatization that tends to restrict faith to the category of the individual ruling out any engagement of religion with society has succeeded only in creating in the human psyche, which is essentially social, an arbitrary split.

But it is not possible to go back to the "siege mentality" of the mid-nineteenth century Church. While secularism which denies the transcendent is wrong, secularization is a beneficial thing, since it freed the people of the West from the Christian religion's hegemony in many areas of human existence such as science, medicine, business and commerce. Similarly it is not a question of bringing society into the Church nor controlling society through church-controlled hospitals, schools and cultural organizations. It is to view modern society as a locus of grace, and "examine contemporary social existence with a new sense of respect for the many non-religious institutions that contribute to the well-being of humanity."

The first chapter of the book examines the parameters of a public theology, which analyzes the experience of a church that is engaged in the nation's public life. Over against the wisdom of political pundits that owing to original sin all people act only for self-interest, in the second chapter the authors establish that human life cannot achieve its fullness without a lively and selfless involvement in public life. As they argue in the third chapter the basic source and model of internationally recognized human rights is the Trinitarian life of the Godhead. The book takes great pains to explore the relevance of the mysteries of Christian faith for the social life of man. Thus a consistent ethic of life flows naturally from the vision of a life of grace (ch. 4). It is the mystery of creation by God that forms the strongest argument for environmental ethics (ch. 5). The

Son of God born in the flesh in a particular nation and culture should be the theological argument for patriotism (ch 6). Finally the communion of saints provides support for an ethic of solidarity (ch. 7). The simple structure of the book makes it very readable very much like a social catechism. The authors, two blood brothers, one a well known systematic theologian and the other a moral theologian, should be congratulated for their new style of theologizing which responds to a growing need among intellectuals today.

Herman-Emil Mertens, *Not the Cross, but the Crucified, An Essay in Soteriology*, Louvain: Peters Press, 1992.

This book published in the Louvain Theological & Pastoral Monographs discusses the mystery of salvation principally in the perspective of liberation. Avoiding the trendy character of Latin American Liberation Theology, the author presents the Christian doctrine of liberation, which he developed in lectures on Christology at the Louvain University, at which several Latin American liberationists got their theological training. The literary genre of the book is that of a collection of essays approaching the same theme from different perspectives: the Bible, the patristic and medieval tradition, and modern theological thinking. In several respects the book is original: It avoids specialist terminology to make the book readable also for non-theologians. Though firmly rooted in Biblical scholarship and historical research it relativizes the past and translates it into the present.

The Christian concept of liberation is based on two conclusions, that the world has been of old a place of misery; and that Jesus of Nazareth is the source of liberation from that misery. In the secularized modern culture only the second conclusion is called into question. But the answer is that owing to his unique personal relation to God, Jesus Christ is in a unique way the revelation of 'humanity's salvation from God'. It is the conscious, defined need for liberation, political, social, economic, cultural, physical or psychological, that finds its response in the joyful resurrection of the Crucified. Against the background of our needs is the Gestalt of Jesus as a redeemer and liberator crystallized. "Buddhism, with its existential point of departure — namely the fact that everything is suffering — constitutes pre-eminently the humanistic story of salvation" (p. 20). To this anthropocentric approach Islam provides a theocentric contrast. The Protest-atheism that runs from Feuerback to Marx, Nietzsche and Freud asks: "If God existed, then why the evil?" But self-liberation is a contradiction and an illusion. Those held in bondage needs an outside liberator, and if the scope of liberation is gaining of divine life, the principle of liberation also should be divine.

The book shows in great detail how the liberator appears

only within a complex of religious concepts: Jesus as liberator cannot be removed from the context of proclamation, liturgy, the message of Jesus, and his Spirit enlivening the entire New Testament. Jesus' story, again, is a continuation from the messianism of the Old Testament, which emphasized the first cause of our salvation, God, and somewhat neglected the secondary causes. The Old Testament soteriological models are Election, Promise, Covenant, Exodus and Justice, the last being a polyvalent concept with overtones of varying juridical emphases such as ransom, substitution. The New Testament did not take the Redeemer as an ontological reality from which dogmatic conclusions were to be drawn but as a symbol that invites both thinking and rethinking. The crucified Christ redefines the Messiah. The historicity of Jesus' suffering is reinterpreted in four different ways to answer, why Jesus had to suffer. But ultimately all of them had to find the salvific interpretation in a mission from God, "according to the Scriptures." The word salvation, "soteria" entered very late in the Christian language of proclamation under Hellenic influence, while in the Hebrew milieu the term was "sacrifice" analogous to that of the Paschal Lamb (1 Cor. 5:7).

This pluralism of reflecting and speaking about Jesus, the Saviour, introduced in the Patristic age various ideas like communication of divine life (Irenaeus), and mediation (Augustine). Totally outside the Biblical context, but within the social, cultural, and theological milieu of feudal times was Anselm's concept of "satisfaction". In the extremely secularized climate of modern culture people talk of redemption as 'New Being' as victory over alienation (Paul Tillich), as God-suffering-with-us (Moltmann), or revelation of God's rule in the world, and especially in the Latin American Liberation Theology as "freedom", realized on the political, subjective and theological planes.

The last four chapters of the book are devoted to exploring the specific dimensions of the Redeemer that appeals most to the modern world. For "the destitute, the disabled, the drug addicts, the cancer and AIDS patients, the unemployed, the lonely, the mourning and other suffering people" Jesus is the model believer. For those who want to change the world the crucified Christ is the ideal martyr who mastered the Golgotha situation. For the whole world the Risen Jesus is the coming Lord, giving hope and courage to all.

On the whole, the book is a comprehensive text of christology that brings out the unity of the discussion of the incarnate word and the work of salvation. The beauty of the book is that it makes the topic of redemption intelligible not only to Catholics but to all believers and non-believers alike.

J. B. Chethimattam

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